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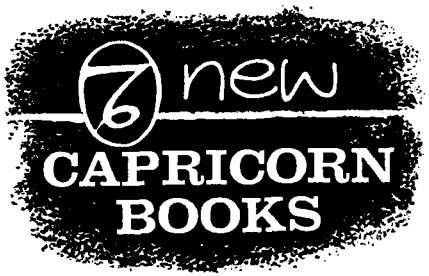

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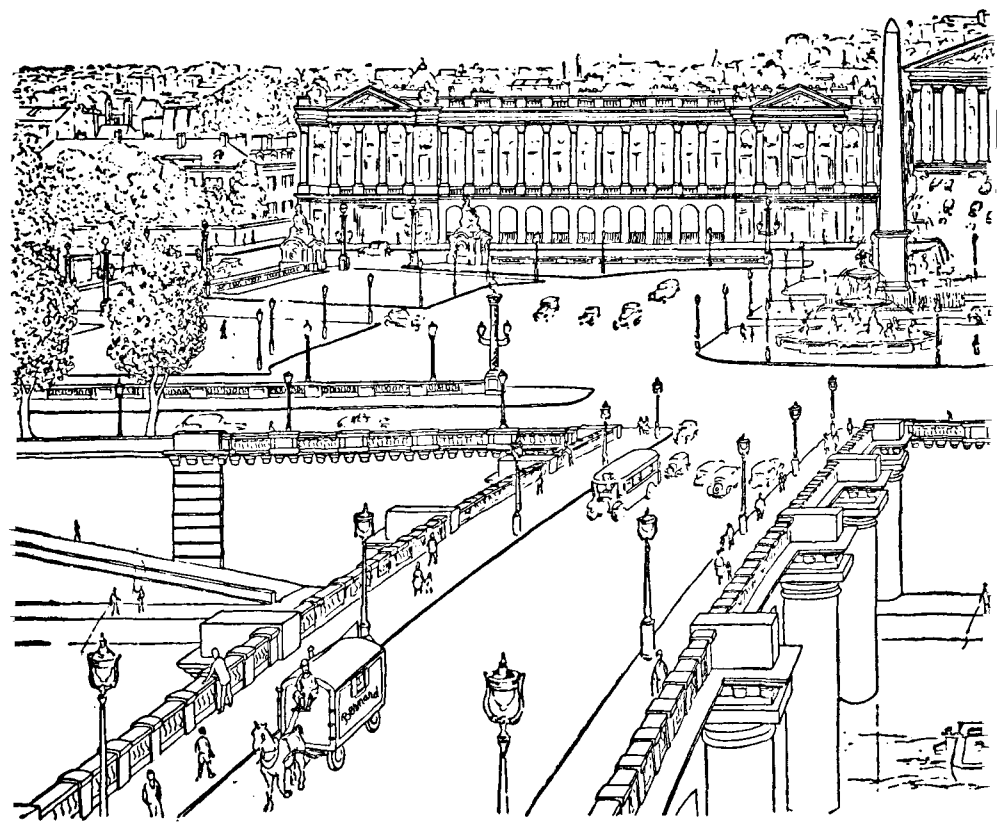

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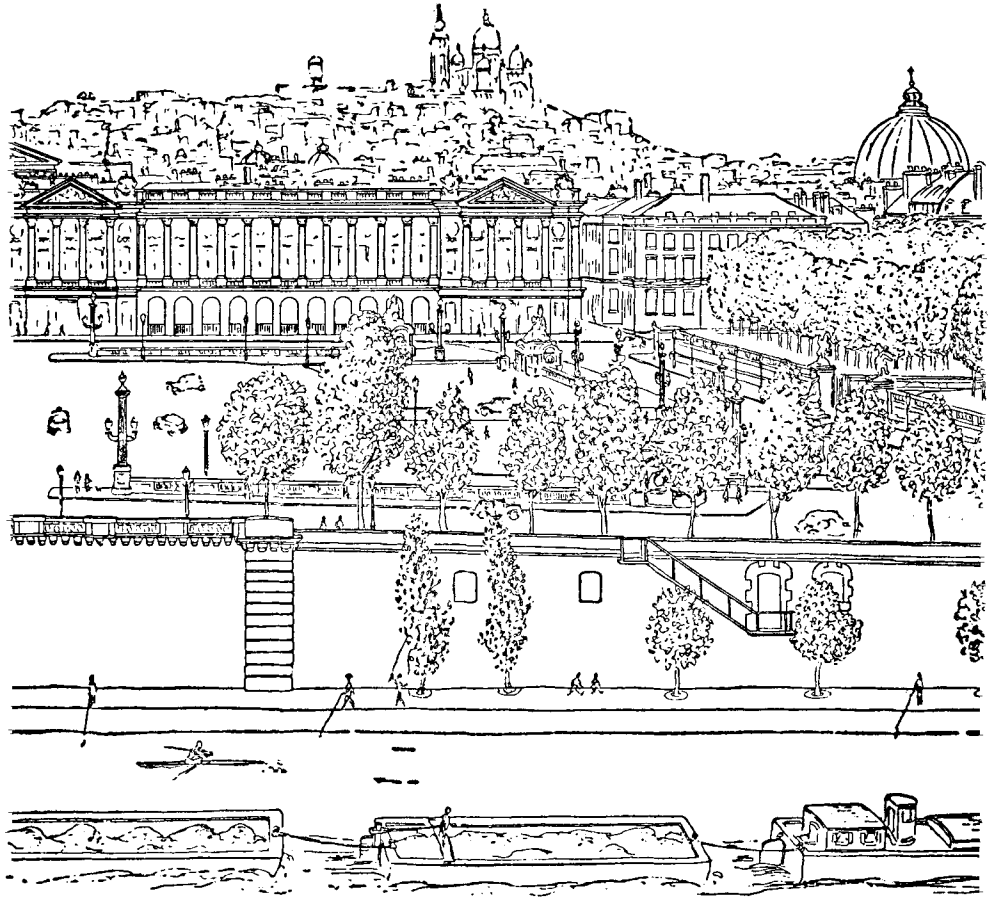

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(Cover by Lars Bo, from a series of etchings, "Les Cris de Paris," Contents Page by Hans Beck, Frontispiece by William Pene du Bois)

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JAN GERHARD TOONDER

The Spider

Victor had just opened the door and taken his young wife in his arms to carry her over the threshhold, when the agent, Judgeworth, stepped out of the bushes and asked him if he did not think this the right moment to buy a good, solid insurance policy. Marietta laughed and Victor said, "Certainly not!"

"It is very important," claimed the agent, Judgeworth. "I'll give you my card."

But Victor's hands were not free so the agent had to slip the card into his coat pocket. After that, the agent Judgeworth watched Victor carry his bride inside, into the cool silence of the country house, and kiss her before he kicked the door shut behind him.

They listened to the agent's footsteps disappear down the gravelled walk. There was no other sound, except that of some birds outside. Victor felt embarrassed for a moment. As long as he carried her in his arms, he could be nothing but clumsy, and the worst of it was that suddenly there was nothing more to talk about. I wish my dog were here, he thought. A dog always provides diversion. In his embarrassment he hugged her somewhat closer and felt how slender and warm she was; then, finally, he carried her to the bedroom.

Luckily, the family had seen to it that there were several surprises. Looking at the flowers and the embroidered tablecloths, at the home-made cushions and the vases they could talk and laugh again. Marietta was moved by the bowl of fruit her mother had put beside the bed and he pointed out to her the little silver fruit knife his practical father had placed next to it. It looked so inviting that she sat down on the edge of the bed to peel an apple. When she put a second little slice

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in his mouth he took her in his arms and eased her down into the cushions. Marietta was beautiful and glowing. The soft light of the afternoon became dusk and the dusk became night and soon afterwards another day went by. They loved each other and they had been married before the law.

Victor was awakened by a sound. There was a half-darkness in the room; he did not know if it was morning or evening. Her head rested on his shoulder and the small face with smiling mouth, ever-so-slightly opened, looked so childlike that he felt a deep tenderness for her as he softly stroked the smooth skin of her breast and hip.

But the sound that woke him was repeated—a shrill, silly sound like a child's trumpet, coming, probably, from an instrument with which a street vendor was trying to attract attention. The piping drew nearer until it sounded beneath the window; at first he smiled, but when it kept up he became afraid that it would wake Marietta and so he slipped softly out of the bed and went to the door.

"Who's there?" he asked, through the door slot.

Outside a full voice answered, sounding jubilant, as though belonging to someone who knows himself to be a long expected guest, "The fish-monger!"

"Oh—go on!" shouted Victor. The piping became softer and softer and then vanished down the street.

Nevertheless, Marietta had been awakened. When he entered the room she was sitting upright and asked, "What was that?"

"The fish-monger," he said.

She laughed. "Did you buy anything?"

"I don't like fish."

He thought her irresistibly attractive as she lay there between the back-flung sheets, but the coming of the fish-monger had called them back to reality. He wound his watch. They looked outside and took in their surroundings and after that the days and nights were paid out to them regularly, as to all other people.

After a few days he felt that his work needed him again.

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"But there is no real necessity," said Marietta.

"Let's not talk about that again," he answered curtly. Marietta had an income on which they could live, but he liked his work and it required his presence, and he had arranged before their wedding to carry on with it.

"I'm jealous of your work," she said. Because he had been short with her, he embraced her that night with a still greater tenderness. When he left the house the next morning, she waved to him, laughing.

Victor was happy and since happiness is still more blinding than love, it took him quite a long time to notice that she had become pale and laughed less easily, and that there was something forced in her caresses.

"Is there something bothering you?" he asked at last.

"No," she said. "Or ... yes." She looked at him as though he were a stranger she wanted to know, and then she looked away again. "No, of course there's nothing."

He paid more attention to her now and a few days later he asked, "Shall I have the dog brought here after all? You'd be less lonely then."

"Please no," she said. She did not like the dog; she was afraid of him.

"I feel there is something. Perhaps it is being alone," he pressed her. "You'd get used to the dog quickly enough."

She said hurriedly, "That isn't it. It's just a very small thing."

"What."

"Promise you won't laugh at me?"

"Promise."

"There is a spider in the house."

Because he remembered his promise in time he did not laugh, but said, "There will be more than one. That's country life for you."

"Yes—but this is no ordinary spider. It races through the room now and then and it's this big." She indicated the size of a large marble.

In that moment he did not love her. The fear of a spider seemed unnatural to him and apart from that, she had no right really to deny him the dog. It was a kind, true dog, so at-

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tached to him that it always carried his newspaper and his pipe and other little things after him.

At night he wanted to make up for this moment of estrangement, but he felt too tired.

Then for a time nothing much happened. They had a small quarrel once when she gave him fish for dinner though she knew he did not like it, but then she told him how the fishmonger had insisted upon her buying something, and after that they both considered the subject too unimportant. But again he regretted his shortness and that only made him look at her with more curiosity until at last he asked, "And is it really only the spider that's bothering you?"—for he missed her former gaiety.

"Yes—it's this big," she said, and this time indicated something the size of a dove's egg. "It has long, hairy legs. It comes suddenly and races through the room. I never see where it comes from or where it goes."

Always, when she spoke of the spider he felt a chill disgust for her. Of course, he let no outward sign of this escape. Nevertheless he covered the house from top to bottom with a powerful insecticide. A few days later he found her crying on the doorstep of the house without the courage to enter it again.

"I've seen him again," she whispered, "and he's growing; he's getting bigger all the time."

"Nonsense," he said.

"Don't go inside. Come with me—away!" She clung to him desperately. "Please let's go somewhere, together. Please, I beg you. That thing is bad luck."

"Will you finish with that nonsense?" he demanded. He entered the house; he inspected it from cellar to attic but could find no opening where an insect of that size could hide. Of course he had never seen the animal himself.

When at last she overcame her fear and followed him, shivering, he said, "This has been enough. I'll send for the dog. You'll get to like him after a while and you won't be so alone. He's a fast dog and if there is a spider here, he'll catch it soon enough."

He would have preferred to fetch the dog himself but since

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his work obliged him to take a trip for several days, he ordered the kennel to bring the animal to his house.

Returning from the trip he found Marietta more silent and pale than ever. A fish dinner was awaiting him; the whole house smelled of cooked fish. It nauseated him.

"Where's the dog?" he asked.

She divided the fish and answered without looking up, "It was terrible."

"Where is he?"

"He hated me. I was frightened. I thought I'd go crazy."

"What did you do?" Victor asked, menacingly.

"Then the fish-monger came. He has taken him with him for the time being."

Victor cursed.

"He'll bring him back," she said, hurriedly. "Now that you're home he'll bring him back; he promised—but I couldn't bear being alone with that dog any longer."

"I suppose you would rather be alone with your spider," Victor said angrily.

She shook her head. "The spider has gone," she said.

In the next few days Victor tried to find the fish-monger. He asked after him everywhere. He searched the entire neighbourhood but in vain. Marietta, too, said that she knew nothing about him and never saw him any more.

It was a time of silence between the two. Victor longed for what had once made him happy but knew that it was over. She grew thin and pale—but he was incapable of worrying about her any more and she did not complain. The tenderness between them had gone, but neither were there reproaches— until one morning getting up, he said rather sharply, "You could do a better job of cleaning the place. There are fleas."

"Impossible," she said.

"I've been bitten tonight. I felt it."

"Show me."

He bared his chest. In his sleep he had distinctly felt the sharp bite, but there was nothing to be seen. She shrugged her shoulders. "You are just nagging," she said.

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But in the nights following, he felt again that he was being bitten. So there were vermin in the house and it was her fault. It was the only thing he could rightly hold against her; but he never mentioned it because the mark of the bites could not be found. After a week he resolved to stay awake one night; if he could catch something he would then have proof.

For a few hours he lay staring. It was a moonlit night and enough light filtered in to outline the furniture and also the face of the sleeping woman beside him. There had been a time when he had been moved because she slept with her mouth so slightly opened; now it merely irritated him and he avoided looking at her. At last his tiredness overcame him and he sank into sleep—so lightly however, that he was immediately wide awake upon feeling the bite. He bolted up and was just in time to see something dark scurrying away; but he could do nothing more and sat there paralyzed from the shock. The dark thing had been as big as an egg. It was too big to hide unnoticed in the bed, bigger than any insect could be.

When he calmed down he was forced to blame it upon his imagination. Such things do not exist. He was overstrung; perhaps he had had too much to drink—and he had reproached Marietta unjustly.

Despite his reasoning, he spent the next day chilled with shock and he understood that at any cost he had to conquer this twisted fantasy. The only way to succeed, he knew, was to force himself to stay awake through the night and thus convince himself that nothing had actually happened.

Had he wanted it, he would have found sleep impossible that following night—the frightful fantasy had struck so deep that merely lying in the same bed filled him with horror. So he was grateful for the moonlight gliding in. Darkness could have been unbearable and he did not want to light a lamp for fear of awakening Marietta.

The hours passed. It was a still night and nothing could be heard but the occasional distant howling of a dog. Nothing moved; only the moonlight, creeping with time along the ceiling and the furniture, and over the bed. There was so little to distract him that Victor was forced to become ever more

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conscious of the sleeping woman beside him, of her breathing, of her face on the pillow.

At first it appeared as a dark spot. This is reality, he thought, this is no imagination, this cannot be escaped. Then the moonlight came creeping slowly, slowly over her loose, fanned hair and finally to her face.

That face had become thin and pale and she slept with her mouth open; it was no mere dark spot now, but everything loved and lost and fiendish that Victor knew. He tried to divert his eyes but could not, for there was, after all, nothing to be seen but this.

She looked a corpse, he thought. He wished that something in that face would stir—he did not want to wake her but he longed for some movement, some small sign of life.

And at last he saw something. Something moved along the edge of her teeth—the lips pursed forward as though she intended to stick out her tongue, but it was not her tongue that emerged.

It was a thick black thread, moving hesitantly, feeling about her underlip. A moment later a second thread appeared, then a third; then something moved inside her mouth and a dark mass crawled forward.

Victor shouted and before the weird thing could escape, his hand swept with a blind instinct in a swift arc and dealt her a crushing blow on the mouth.

She awoke terrified and the imprint of his open hand showed white on her skin. She cried in pain and asked why he had done it, what was the matter; but he only mumbled incoherently—something about a mishap in his sleep. He had had a nightmare, he said.

To escape the fear that pursued him, there was no recourse but sleeping pills; and the night passed unconscious. He did not even experience the feeling of being bitten. And when day came he was able to adjust himself to think clearly. The memory of the blow he had dealt her filled him with remorse and pity and he forced a solicitousness and even a display of love for her which in his heart had no real place, but she responded to this unexpected warmth in a vague, distraught

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way. However, she took painstaking care of the house and of his things.

Once she gave him some slips of paper and odds and ends she had taken from the pockets of an old coat; they were forgotten, unimportant things and he threw them away, except the card from the agent Judgeworth.

That remained on his desk for some time and he only tore it up after writing Judgeworth a letter, inviting him to call the following evening to arrange an insurance policy on Marietta's life.

Only that night, having written the letter, did the thought dawn upon him that by taking out a policy he might make his wife's poor health profitable to himself, and this thought would not leave him alone; despite the sleeping pills he could do no more than doze off into a fitful slumber wracked with restless dreams that brought him time and again to the edge of consciousness.

Because he was not benumbed as on previous nights, he felt the bite again; but when the small, sharp pain woke him he resolved not to move, only to look, and verify the fact at last. Very slowly he opened his eyes. In the pale stripe of moonlight he saw the spider standing on his chest.

The beast with the eight hairy threadlike legs was the size of a fist. The hollow, lustreless eyes stared straight into his. It had grown much bigger, Victor thought calmly. He understood that he had already known about this for some time.

The spider retreated crabwise; he could scarcely feel the wriggling legs on his skin, and the monster moved in such a way that the expressionless eyes fixed themselves unwaveringly upon his as it crept to his shoulder and then crossed to the breast of the sleeping woman. Still staring, it moved backwards along her throat, stood waiting a moment upon her chin until her mouth opened wider, and it slipped inside.

She slept undisturbed; she did not stir; he only saw that she swallowed and that something moved in her throat. By then his groping hand had clutched the silver fruit knife from the night table and with all his force he stabbed it into that moving spot.

He knew that something terrible had happened; but it

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seemed as though it had happened to someone else; as if it had been one of those twisted dreams which kept him fitfully awake until the sleeping pills took effect. They did now. Sleep came to him like a coma.

Waking late the next day he was still groggy. He got up, went to wash and shave, dressed, and only then went back to the bed to look. Her eyes and mouth were half opened. The knife protruded from her throat, the source of the coagulated trail of blood. She must have stayed alive a long time, he thought, otherwise it wouldn't have bled so much. The blood had dripped over the bed and had formed a pool under the window. He went downstairs and found that it had leaked through the ceiling; a second pool had formed behind the front door and a thin stream had even trickled outside, beyond the threshold. A great deal of blood, he thought.

He wanted to begin cleaning it up from its source so he went back to the bed and drew the knife from her throat. He looked at it, washed it in the basin and put it down next to the fruitbowl. At that moment he heard her say, "Thank you. Thank you very much."

He felt the instinctive impulse to answer, but then saw all too clearly that she was dead. Her eyes had gone glassy, her mouth had stiffened, her skin showed green. Still more important than cleaning up the blood, he had to bury her before she would be discovered, but when he lifted her he again heard her voice, coming clear and lifelike from her throat, "I thank you. Thank you. Thank you."

He laid her down and stood rooted there, looking at her and making no movement; and the time passed. Dusk came, darkness came, but he could not move.

At the appointed hour, the agent Judgeworth rang the bell. He rang the bell again and waited for some time, but then apparently he noticed the bloodtrail that had trickled past the threshold. The sound of his rapidly retreating footsteps over the gravelled walk brought Victor back to reality. He was given away now, he thought. He would have to act quickly before the chase was on, and so he picked up the corpse, carried it down the stairs and outside into the garden.

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"Thank you," she said.

"Shut up!" he ordered. He had to dig a hole to make her disappear, to smother her voice forever under two heavy cubic yards of earth, and he had to be quick about it. A sound approached already; and panic gripped his mind.

"Shut up! Shut up!" he hissed once more, looking about for a spade and a suitable spot. The sound came nearer.

"Oh—thank you," her voice said.

He hit her on the mouth again, as he had done once before, but the voice went on, "Because now you will always be with me."

"No," he said. "No. That's what you wanted but it will not be. I'll not allow it to..." He shoved her into the shrubbery. She remained silent and his hands were free, but the sound drew level with the corner of the garden path, a bleating noise like that of a cardboard trumpet. It ceased only when Victor went to it. In the bend of the path he found a large cart, a little house on wheels almost, with a thin, pale man standing next to it.

"The fish-monger," said the man.

In each hand he held a small fish and he said in a seductive voice, "Tender and soft, the healthiest food."

"You haven't come for that—at this time of night," said Victor.

The fish-monger took a step forward to whisper, "No, I have not come to peddle but to help."

"To help—with what?"

"The law is on its way," said the fishmonger. "The law knows all and exacts its punishment. Only I can help you."

"Why do you do that?"

"I have been given your dog."

The fish-monger preceded him to the hole in the shrubbery where he had pushed the corpse, bowed down and picked it up. "Let me carry it," he said. "You are tired. Come with me. You can rest and then hide from the law."

He laid the body on the bottom of the cart and made Victor understand that he had to lie down next to it. "No," said Victor, "that is impossible. I'll do anything. Push the cart—anything but not that."

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"Only there will you remain undetected," replied the fish-monger, lifting him with irresistible strength and forcing him to the bottom of the cart. "You needn't do anything. I'll bring you to safety. I'll take care of everything for you. Obey me and you shall escape the law."

Victor lay in the darkness of the heavy, shuddering cart which seemed too ponderous a thing to be moved by any single person; but the wheels clattered over the cobblestones and beside them he heard the tireless and regular footsteps leading through the night. The hard cart bottom went up and down. There was a warm smell of rotting fish and the dead body lay so near that he was forced to touch it at every bump and lurch—but she said nothing and this silence made the black ride bearable.

When the cart stopped and Victor was permitted to step out, he saw that they were in a high, cold, vault-like room, a place he had never seen before. Besides the cart, there were only a few crates and benches and a refectory table. A few passages led into the room, looking like dark and gaping mouths.

The fish-monger lit two candles. He took the corpse from the cart and laid it on the table, near the edge and leaving some room.

"Here you are well hidden," he said. "Here you are safe forever."

"What should I do?" asked Victor.

"Nothing," replied the fish-monger, pressing him onto one of the benches by the table with his immense strength. "Nothing. Please relax. I do everything."

Victor sat very close to the dead face and had to look past it to see the fish-monger spread fish over the unoccupied part of the table and how with rapid, deft movements he slit out their entrails.

"I'll be sick. I have to vomit," Victor whispered.

The fish-monger glanced up and said, shaking his head, "Fight it down. Better think of something else—nothing can happen after all."

He tried not to watch the quick, pale hands and the disembowelled fish but in the dark room there was nothing else

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to attract his attention—except the face of the dead. When, despite his will, his eyes came to rest upon her, a voice spoke very softly, "Thank you. Now you shall always stay with me."

"It's the spider," Victor said, with horror. "The spider is alive."

The fishmonger nodded. "That is your fault."

"No—not my fault. Yours... You didn't bring back the dog."

The other stood up and came toward him from behind the table. "I needed him. He drew my cart." They looked at each other a moment and in the silence only the whispering of the dead could be heard, until Victor summoned all his strength to shout out the name of the dog; and before the echo had died in the hollow room he was answered by a wild, delirious barking, sounding from one of the passages.

Alarmed, the fish-monger stepped back.

From the passage came the sound of wood creaking under a barrage of blows, then a new burst of barking, then a rending and splintering. But Victor could not wait. The fish-monger had turned to the corpse and he saw that now, as though it had been conjured forth, something began to move in the stiff mouth.

He fled into another passage and behind him heard the grateful voice thanking him loudly and the rushing approach of the dog—then suddenly there was silence and though he groped his way blindly through darkness he dared not run back. Silence accompanied him, the silence of the three beings he left behind, who must have encountered each other back there but who gave no indication as to whether they would fight or only wait; of whom he knew nothing now but that they were silent.

Then he stood in an early dawn by the bank of a river, at a spot he has never been able to find since.

"It's morning. I'll hear the birds again soon," he thought. But it remained silent.

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TWO POEMS by X. J. KENNEDY

AT THE GHOSTWRITER'S DEATHBED

How many statesmen let you move their lips
  like creaking shutters while they stood there dazed?
What statues did you dedicate? What ships
  were launched on winds a little money raised?

Old whisperer, get you gone, give our ears ease...
  here, take your gibber with you. You've
graven your tombstone in officialese.
  Get under it. Go moan at one remove.

Incomplete spirit in a house laid waste,
  with thinning hands you tweeze threads from your sheet.
Little to hate is left of you. The priest
  forgives you, gives you flesh and blood to eat.

At cockcrow helpless for a turn of phrase
  a hollow teletype forgets to click.
Stiff is the air you tortured with clichés
  and tongueless stands the body politic—

You sigh between our lines. We can't erase
  your one historic catchphrase. Worn to death
it walks, a murmur from some public face—
  Christ—did we think we'd boarded up your breath?

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IN A PROMINENT BAR IN SECAUCUS ONE DAY

With thanks to Claire McAllister for pointing out that these words may be sung to the tunes of 'The Old Orange Flute' and 'Sweet Betsy from Pike.'

In a prominent bar in Secaucus one day
Rose a lady in skunk with a topheavy sway,
Raised a knobby red finger—all turned from their beer—
While with eyes bright as snowcrust she sang high and clear:

'Now who of you'd think from an eyeful of me
That I once was a princess, and proud as could be?—
Oh I'd never sit down by a tumbledown drunk
If it wasn't, my dears, for the high cost of junk.

'All the gents used to swear that the white of my calf
Beat the down of the swan by a length and a half—
In the kerchief of linen I caught to my nose
Ah, there never fell snot, but a little gold rose.

'I had seven gold teeth and a toothpick of gold,
My Virginia cheroot was a leaf of it rolled,
And I'd light it each time with a hundred in cash—
Why the bums used to fight if I flicked them an ash.

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'In a car like the Roxy I'd roll to the track,
A steel-guitar trio, a bar in the back,
And the wheels made no noise, they turned over so fast—
It would take you ten minutes to see me go past.

'When the horses bowed down to me that I might choose
I bet on them all, for I hated to lose—
Now I'm saddled each night for my butter and eggs
And the broken threads race down the backs of my legs.

'Let you hold in mind, girls, that your beauty must pass
Like a lovely white clover that rusts with its grass—
Keep your bottoms off barstools and marry you young
Or you'll end—an old barrel with many a bung.

'For when time takes you out for a spin in his car
You'll be hard-pressed to stop him from going too far
And be left by the roadside, for all your good deeds,
Two toadstools for tits and a face full of weeds.'

All the house raised a cheer, but the man at the bar
Made a phonecall and up pulled a red patrol car
And she blew us a kiss as they copped her away
From that prominent bar in Secaucus, N. J.

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LEWIS TURCO

DREAM OF A HOUSE

Her night-dreaming laugh
wound the house around her fingernail.
Spooled it so tightly
that the windows slopped in their sashes
like trapped ink. Halls became parchment doors.
The walls hid behind

their pictures and lamps
winked beneath their bowlers; a clock oozed
its pendulums. The
couch roared warnings in the carpet's ear.
But the house, no longer stable, jounced
—a papier-mache

sphericle—down her
eyes' ivory stairway, taking me
too. Crushed within my
easy chair, I bounce hard upon each
landing. This is no highway. Her lips
part. And her teeth laugh.

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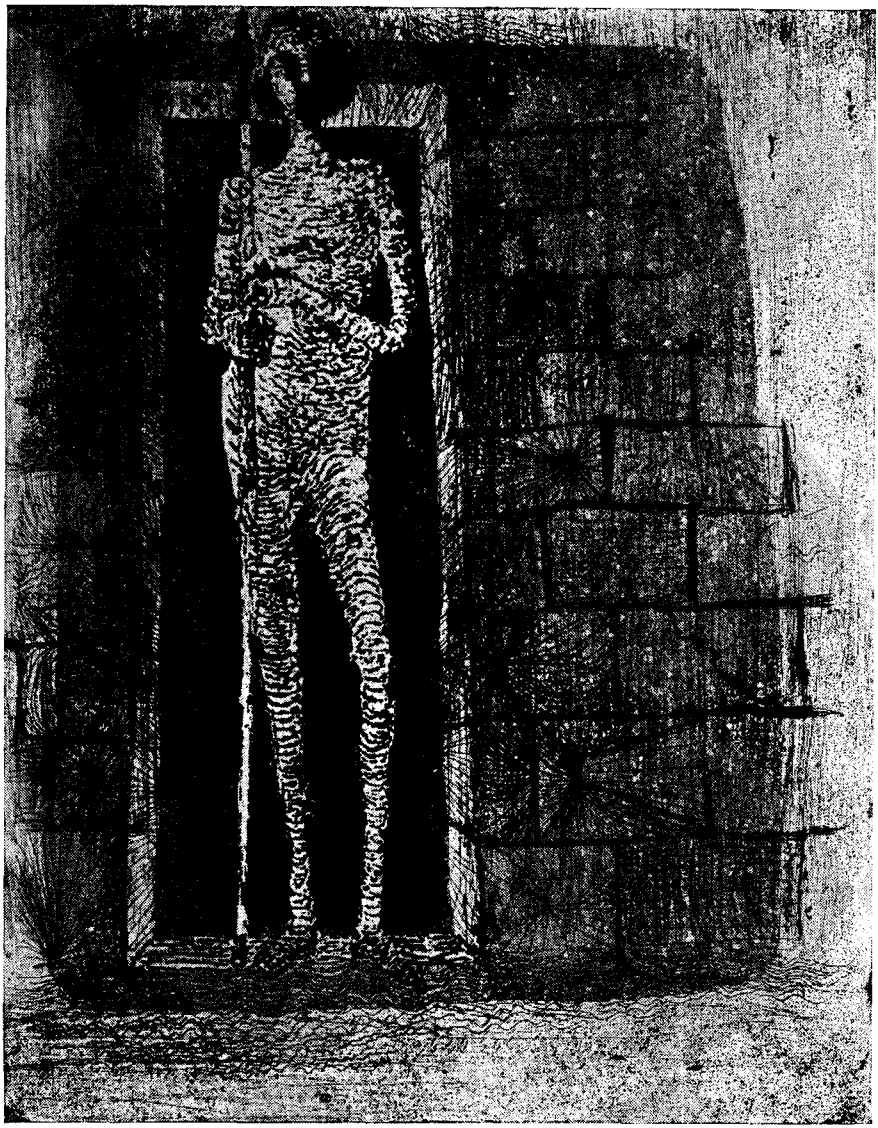

BEFORE THE LAW

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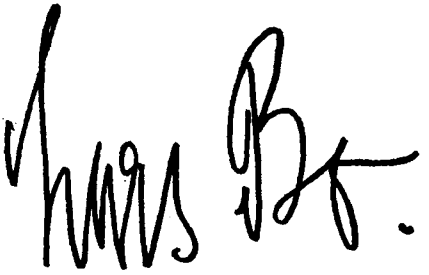

a Dane who settled here in 1950, is one of the foremost of Paris' growing number of engravers. His work has mostly appeared as illustrations (or "illuminations," as he prefers to think of them, in the tradition of the medieval Books of Hours) in editions of one hundred to two hundred copies. The etchings in this portfolio, for example, are from a book of Franz Kafka's shorter writings, selected by the artist, which was published last fall by Gyldendal in Copenhagen. The titles of these stories and fragments appear below each "illumination."

That Bo should choose his literary subject matter is not surprising, for he is an avowedly 'literary' artist. "Almost everything I do," he says, "begins with a word, a verse, or an expression... words which evoke dreams." He believes the process of engraving peculiarly suited to the rendering of dreams because of the mirror-image and negative-positive reversals from plate to print. Right will be left and his whitest cutting will be the darkest black. As he cuts deeper through the plate's successive stages he has the impression of reaching more and more deeply into the subconscious of poetic legend.

Lars Bo's work has been bought by the New York Public Library and by many European museums including the Musée d'Art Moderne in Paris where he was awarded First Prize for Engraving at the Biennale de la Jeunesse in 1959. Among his principal publishers and exhibitors are La Guilde de la Gravure, Georges Lambert, and Galerie Varenne—all in Paris—and Delphic Arts of New York which is currently sponsoring a travelling show of his work in the United States. He lives with his Scotch wife and their three children in the traditional artists' quarter of Montparnasse.

—B.F.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE EMPEROR

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THE SCUTTLE RIDER

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THE BRIDGE

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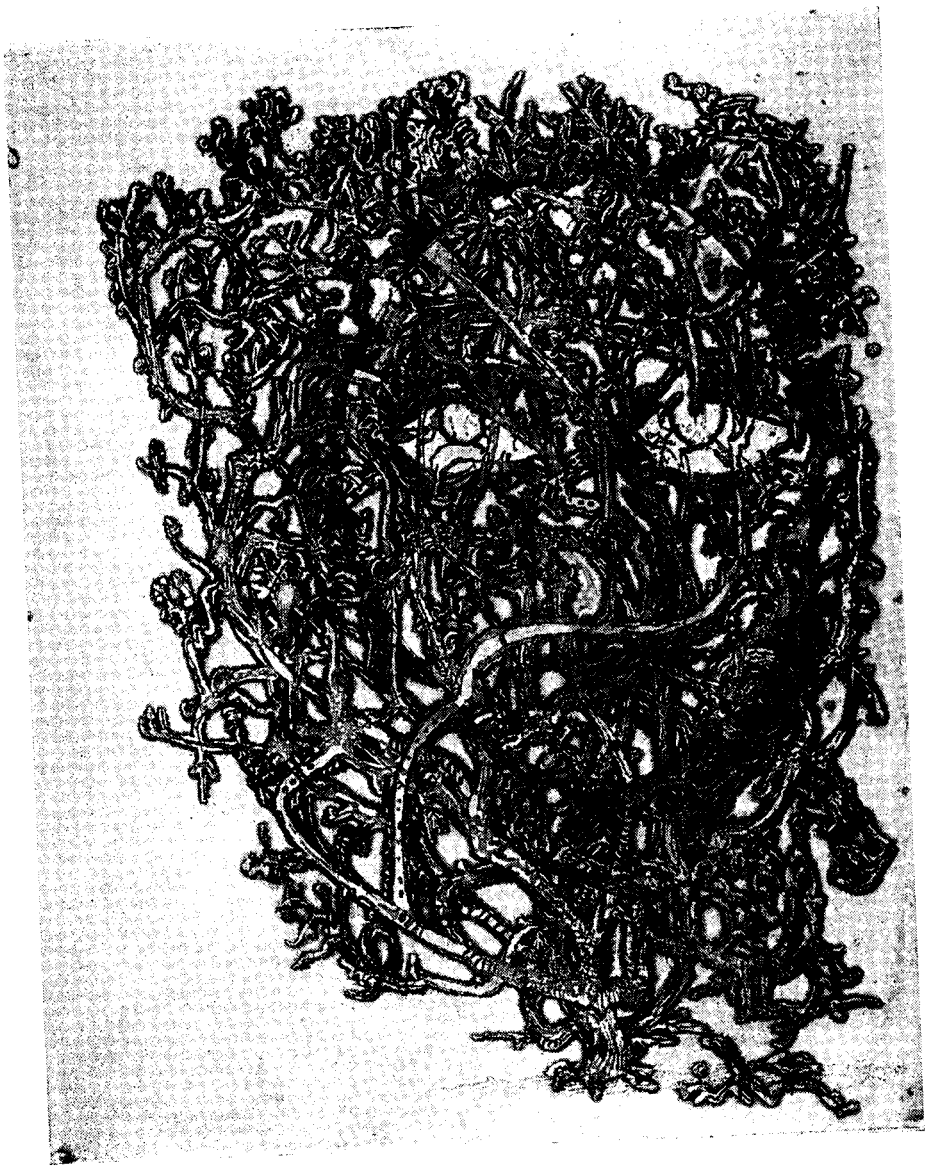

THE BURROW

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THE VULTURE

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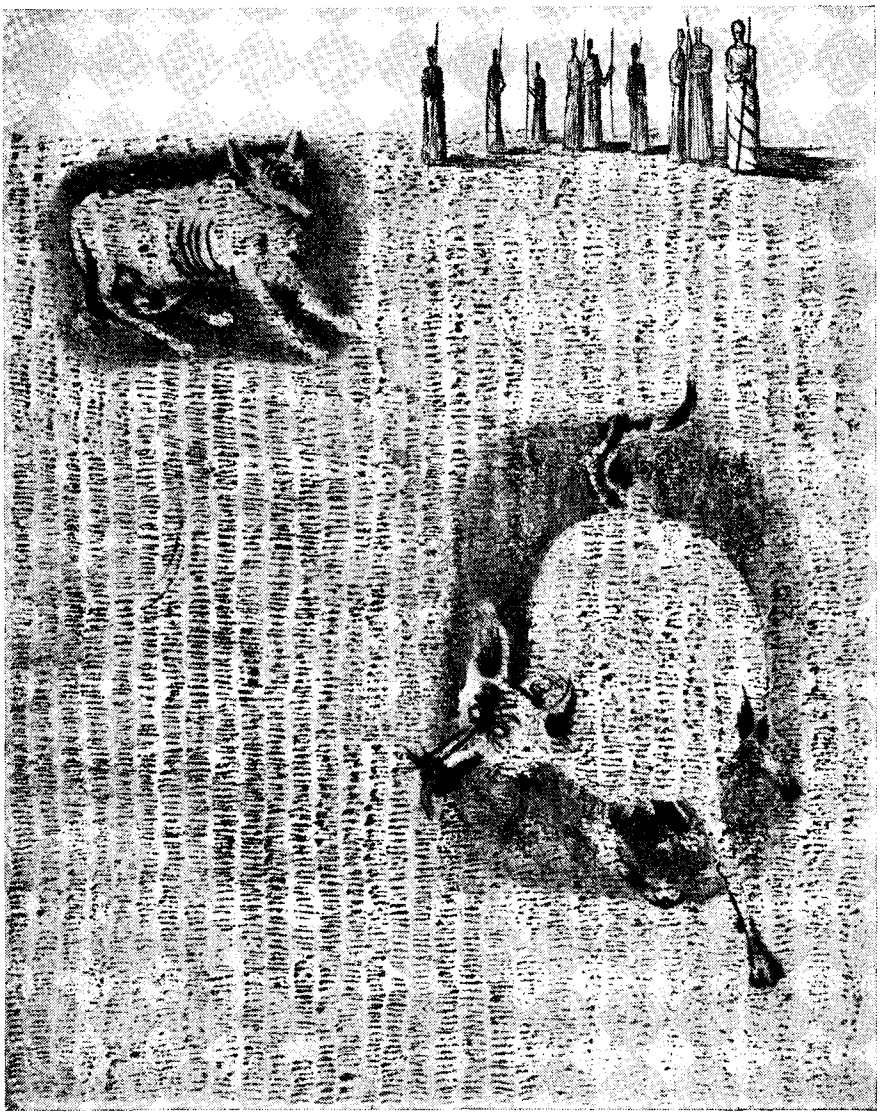

JACKALS AND ARABS

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THE NEXT VILLAGE

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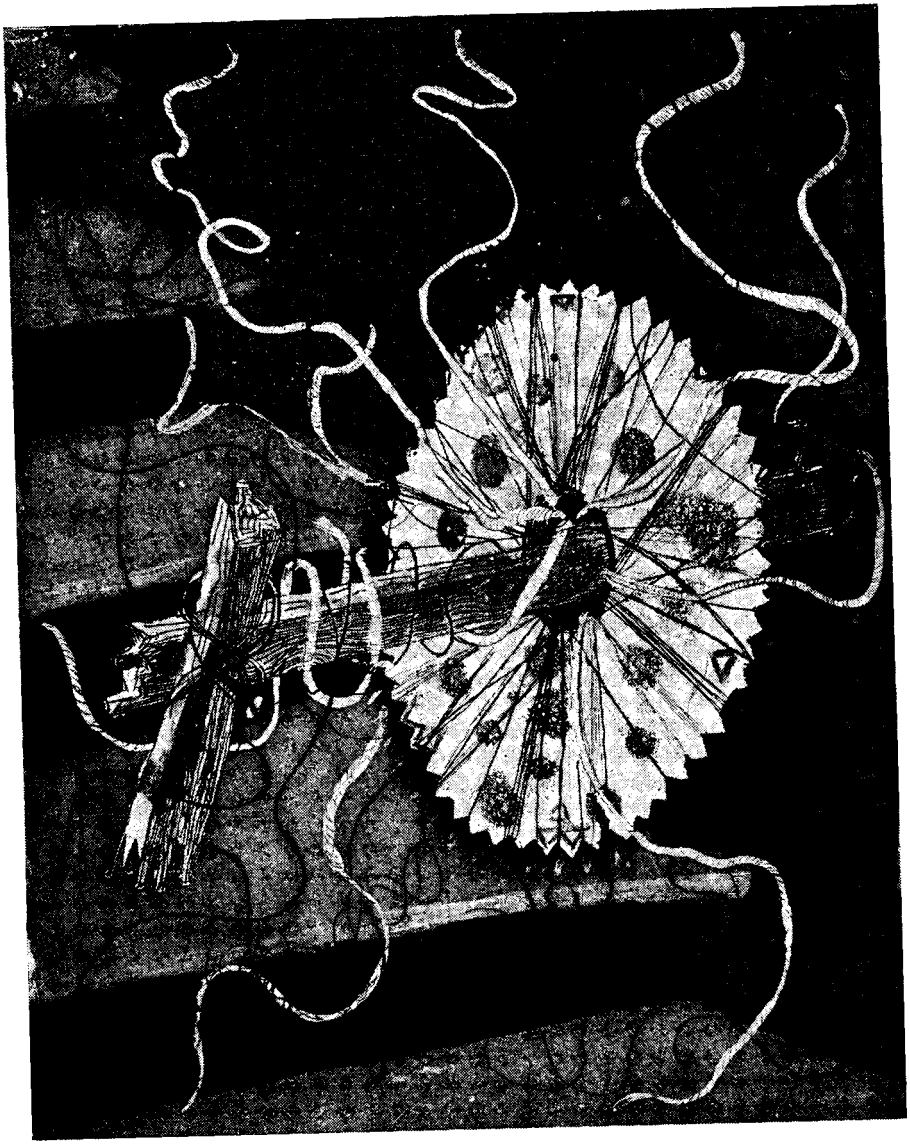

TROUBLES OF A HOUSEHOLDER

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Bowden Broadwater

CIAO

THE morning of February 18, 1947, three months to the day after my marriage, found me stumbling through the Want-Ads in the *Times*. I had been reading them daily for some time in order to give the impression to a certain person that I still believed that someone might really hire me.

The dripolator—a second pot—was dripping at my elbow. Across from me at the bridge-table at which we were breakfasting in the sitting-room, and would in time dine, my dear wife had her assured grip on the front page of the first section of our paper. While she analyzed and synthesized and

illustration by Michael Biddle

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filed the news in her mind, her pretty eyes sparkled like green shampoo shaken well. Also present (we were indebted to the housing-shortage) was my young brother Boris who, unable to get into any institution remotely connected with higher learning, *has* found a job, lives with us, sharing our life and the modest rent. Wrapped in his wrinkled p-js and bathrobe, he was glooming over his coffee, stolidly filling in the twenty minutes he will be late to his job in the stacks of the Public Library. (That drudge is regular even about being late.) The Elevated, concealed by the dear wife's ruffled gray and white draperies, shook itself down Third Avenue; the bridge-table wiggled; the French Premier fell.

I said Excuse Me to Boris and with a paper napkin removed the quivering splash of Cream-of-wheat which was ready to plunge from his spotted chin to the as yet unspotted rug. Pleased by this sign of attention, my poor brother lit the candle in his Jack-o'-Lantern head, and a dim smile spread here and there about his shadowy features. I brought my attention back to the unbroken columns of the Classified, jumped VACUUM Men and X-RAY Technicians in the manner of a horseman who knows his fences, and scanned the openings for YOUNG MEN. Five or six "openings" slammed shut before my eyes: there was nothing. But anyway, I'm no longer Young: by the law of Classified a young man becomes a MAN at twenty-five, suitable at last for the posts of night-watchman or Superintendent, five-floor walkup, apt. in basement; and I recently celebrated this birthday at a delightful party given in its honor by the dear w. So I folded the paper, terminating thus my daily reading of this list of vocations, alphabetically arranged, which continues to increase my knowledge of the positions for which I am untrained or disinclined, usually both. The coffee pot at my elbow *drip-dripped* toward eternity. I cleared the dishes, with the exception of the cups still yawning for more coffee, of the nourishing and delicious breakfast which rain or shine the d.w. serves up to us.

Brother Boris extracted a half-smoked cigarette from his withered pack of Camels with the cautious maneuver of a

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dentist extracting a tooth and, holding it crotched between two stiff yellow fingers in the dead center of his mouth, applied flame and intently puffed. He had it! A doughnut exuded from his rounded lips, at the head of a procession of them. The hour, which Boris's sizeable Ingersoll graciously revealed to my stolen glance, had advanced to 8:40. Prolonged experience has taught me that my brother takes fifteen minutes to dress, and since the Library is twenty minutes away, he cannot dawdle much longer at the breakfast table and still be *just* as late to work as is his wont. He had, however, by now torn his goggles from the smoke rings. But he was eyeing the second section of the paper, so neatly folded by me, with a cautious experimental look. A length of time elapsing, he was puzzling over a photo of three kids waving to a sea-lion in the Central Park zoo. Breathing deeply, Boris took a flyer and spelled out the caption, his lips moving, his cigarette stub specially removed for the event. And then that impractical joke of a boy wished on me by God in all His irony laid down the paper and, bending over his cup which never goes entirely dry, guggled up a sip.

I extricated myself from the bridge-table, went into the kitchen-bathroom, washed the dishes despite the protests rising from the depths of the d.w.'s paper. The dripolator was still at it, *drip-drip-dripping*, the sands of time. I tucked a dishtowel into the waist of the trousers of my good gray worsted suit which contributes the better part of my appearances before employers, thought to be prospective—by the d.w. at least—and reached, needless to say, by means more direct than the *Times*. ("I got my job through the *Times*," indeed!) Dear gray suit, I mused, with me inside, you race fleetly over the green carpet to the employer's side-chair. "Sit down," the employer grants leave. He looks at the record, silently sniffing the lacunae. "Traveling abroad"—uhm. He glances at you absently, or with a single straight look, or with real benevolence; each employer has his own mask. "Now *truly*," he softly flubs his gums, "you're too good for this particular spot, Mr.—eh." Or: "The recession, that's the tickler. Our personnel outlook isn't quite so

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clear... let's say to each other, nothing definite understand, that you, hum, bum, fiddle-you-bum, get in touch with my secretary... well, say next year." He meditates, taking a slow bead on the future, which seems usually to be located in the furthest corner of his office, near the window. "But don't—whatever you do," he reflects, "pass up anything special that comes your way." [Suicide?] *Truly* now, this is the stuff I hear whenever I try to take up the social role which national sentiment, modern society, and material considerations urge me, pronto, to assume.

The dripolator has stopped like the clock in a murder. I returned to the table, which gave the customary wiggle, and filled the wife's, added hot to Boris's which had cooled stonecold as he spooned, and poured mine, too.

"Darling," murmured the d.w., "may I have the second section now, please?" I handed it over and caught up the first, though I had read the better part of it before. The d.w. and I often examine the paper with fastidious care at breakfast in order to cover what might appear to be a rude silence; it is hard not to talk over poor Boris's inarticulate head and, if dinner is to "go," we cannot be reckless with our conversation in the morning. 9:02 declaimed the bulging belfry strapped to Boris's wrist. Had he, I wondered, the intention of setting off to work on a later dot than usual? Or was he going to make a wild-and-woolly last minute dash, as he has done with methodical infrequency, to the curb, and with some power-dream burning dully in his eyes, and with a moist cache of nickels, dimes, and pennies squeezing out of his balled fist, flail at oblivious cabs in an effort to project his retiring figure into the drivers' line of vision? Whichever it was to be, it remained in the order of things that Boris, in a matter of minutes, must set his full cup down in its flooded saucer with the splash and standard chime we recognize as the signal for his departure from the breakfast table: with some kind of queer stoical dignity, he never varies the routine he adopted late, naturally, in the first weeks several months ago when he started work as a stack-boy in the Library. I can see him rising from his chair—like a loaf of

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bread in the oven—long before he does, so clearly that every move, awkward, miserable, is doubly exposed. Whenever the marionette's strings of his routine prompt him to leave the table, he will catch on to such folds as his old maroon, seventy-percent reprocessed wool bathrobe possesses and tiptoe with an apologetically lowered head into the tiny bedroom he has made into his image. There, in his leisure, he hibernates like a bear, shoring up dreams about something that happened behind an unpainted barn on a cloudy day many gray years ago (he was, I believe, shooting marbles when a shrill-voiced girl named Eileen cried out that he was a dumbell), emerging however for his meals and the forty-hour week. Eventually, on a work-day like this, Boris will shuffle his half-soles out of his grotto into the sitting-room and over to the hall door. This marker attained, he will lift his lowered head, blank and proud, from his stooped shoulders, twist uncertainly at the knob as if it were an object he was hesitant to touch, smile a bright, strained, ghastly smile and say, raising a stubby hand in a fast subsiding wave, "*Ciao!*" Though neither Boris, nor the d.w., nor I am at all conversant with Italian, this manner of Mediterranean farewell, accepted for an hallucinated moment as an inexplicable reference to the breed of dog (chow), bears sad evidence to my brother's somber and hopeless infatuation for the unrequiting daughter of an Italian importer—the young lady took a fancy to Boris for a few hours several years ago but it did not last.

"What would you like for dinner, Boris?" inquired the d.w. (her voice reminds me of the morning dew, very fresh), indicating in this way that the imminence of his leave-taking was not entirely absent from her thoughts. Boris ceased to stir his coffee, looked attentively at her, round-eyed, with the appearance of not having altogether heard, or understood, a witty remark. He shook his noodle, nodded, and stirred away. But I, uneasy at the strain he was putting on the workman's day, leaned forward, tapped his watch, looked at him, inquired in slow bell-like tones.

The Elevated roared past and away like a pack of wolves

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streaking across Siberia; Governor Dewey wrenched his left knee; the table trembled. Boris's reply to my question came from some remote, muffled corkscrew in the backwaters of his upper neck and traveled down his spine in the direction of his feet before, reversing, it mounted upward through his expectant throat. "This is Tuesday," he broke into speech, unplugging his stub, strangling. He took another sip of coffee and flushed.

"Oh," I said, "Tuesday!" We knew what Boris meant. Sunday coming to him as slowly as anything else, his day of rest from the Library falls on Tuesday. "Anything special in mind for the holiday?" I asked him.

The prospect of Boris's plans did not excite me. His holidays run the route of a regular milk-train, stopping at all the stops, not failing to pick up a can. To start with, he won't powder up his pimples and *ciao* himself off to the stacks. He will loiter ten minutes more at the table before depositing his cup with the musical sound. Then he will tiptoe, bathrobe following close, into his lair. Shutting the door with emphatic quietness, he will shiver slightly and rub his hands, raising them to close the window should it be open a hair's breadth. *Choo! Chooo!* the morning run: he plugs in an electric heater; flops on his bed, burying himself bathrobe and all beneath a hump of blankets and faded comforters; around noon, opens one eye, rubs it, shuts same again; repeats performance on other eye, opens both, blinks. Brown bear arises. Yawning he stretches, stretching he yawns. He gives the notion that he is being laboriously squeezed out of an empty toothpaste tube. Humming a song of sunrise (Boris has an idea that he should do something with his voice and wishes he could get in some choral singing), he enacts a ritual of "straightening up." He brings together a vast number of pointless pencils and inkless ball-point pens and numberless unfinished letters, going no farther than the salutations and occasionally not that far. These he stuffs in the split shoebox he discovers in the granary he calls a closet. Now Boris is ready to dress: he takes from a hanger—the brown suit. His stubble was shaved yesterday, but he plucks the hair from

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the mole. At long, long last, uttering the *Ciao* that is his testimony to hopeless love (to us; and if we have gone, to the empty room?), he passes outward, saying or writing in a hand that is as changeable as the weather that he thinks he will take some "excercize" [sic], returning in time, so far as he knows, for dinner.

No one will want to hear about Boris's journey through the cindery streets. But, for the record, whether he stops at his favorite or second-favorite Riker's for a bite depends on the direction he happens to take. Whichever it be, munching his coffee-ring and creating a stir in his cup, he listens attentively to his favorite or less favored counter-girl should she speak. Disobeying the no-tipping sign, he hides a dime, or a nickle and five pennies, under his plate and with a shy *Ciao* lurches off, crosstown or downtown or uptown. He lingers before shop-windows, examining dirty silver, amber beads, cigarette lighters, canvas weekend bags, enumerating the objects with the air of a conscientious student proceeding down the buff corridors of the principal museum. Walking, walking slowly, wooden, cold, and stiff, trying to be brave, he finishes his holiday run over a sundae at the corner Rexall where the druggist gives him samples to try, buys a fresh pack of Camels as he pays his check, and makes his way homeward with the intention of beginning a letter—to a school friend he has not seen in five years—which he will never finish.

"This morning the dentist is going to fill my cavities," Boris announced. He caught me unawares. But dentistry is a standard variant in Boris's holidays, Boris being very fond of candy bars. "The appointment's at eleven," he volunteered.

Boris's day went down the tracks. Screening myself with whatever section of the paper was at hand, I considered the fact that this morning the Classified, for the second time in a week, offered no fresh suggestions whatever. It would have been unwise to express relief over this situation, but I was not much dismayed. I seldom, if ever, receive answers to the letters I write Classified advertisers and have privately concluded that any *Times*' boxnumber is a code-address of the United States Dead-Letter Office... With the passing of

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time I have come to regard my solicitations as pure conscience money. When I open the paper and find some firm advertising for me under my own name, I shall begin to feel more optimistic about this so-called clearing house for jobs.

"There's nothing in the *Times*," I remarked.

The d.w. looked at me from the second section in surprise. "But, darling," she said, "you *can't* have looked very carefully." She extended the Classified with several items neatly checked for me.

"Oh," I said. One I really had answered before, with the usual result, and another I was certain would lead nowhere; somehow I had missed the third. I rose from the table, spilling the coffee in Boris's ever-brimming cup, put the paper on the desk, and thanked her.

The d.w.'s green eyes were like the sea, and a faint tear glistened on a lash, two tears. At last she spoke. "Don't you want a job?" she asked.

Boris stopped playing a tune with his spoon. He raised his unnecessarily large head and looked for an instant straight at the d.w. There was a curious flicker in those reddish orbs—had Boris enjoyed a more elevated position, I should almost have believed they registered pity. He lifted a hand; my God, he was going to lay it down gently on the d.w.'s shoulder! But instead, he reached for his chalice, raised it, and gingerly set it back in the saucer. The invariable knell of his departure had been sounded. He gathered the folds of his maroon robe and tip-toed away. The door of his room shut behind him with the sound of a lady eating celery.

The d.w.'s automatic-sprinkler system was poised and waiting. I flounced out to the kitchen with the cups and saucers, compressing my lips into the shortest possible distance between two points. Ha, ha, I was smiling through my tears. The next thing I knew Boris would be drawing me aside to impart a few words of brotherly advice: "I understand perfectly the pressure which society exerts on the unusual individual, but really, brother, you must make *some* effort. I sympathize with you in your difficult position and will do everything in my power to help you. Of course, *I*

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see perfectly that any *thoughtful* man faces *special* problems in making his peace with the world as it is today." Enough was enough. I banged the dishes through a wash and into the cupboard. What if I stalked into the sitting-room, advanced to the desk, tore the Classified into twenty pieces and, holding my arms outstretched, let the scraps drift slowly like snowflakes to the floor? Yes, what if I did? Well, I knew the answer to that: I would stoop right down and pick them up and say, Excuse Me.

Slowly—dish-washing does much to calm—a crafty notion occured to me. What was there to keep me from stealing a holiday? As soon as I finished the formality of my one-way correspondence with the Classified, I could be free for the day. The sky above the d.w.'s red geraniums on the window-sill was a Roman blue. Wearing my gray suit, I could walk in the sun down Park Avenue and over to my hideaway, the quiet library of the Harvard Club, where I have cautiously managed to preserve a membership, acquired in the prosperous war years when my 4-F status had induced several employers to breach their form of never hiring, for just such occasions as this. There, smoking a light cigar while the clock advanced the hour without comment, I could stretch out in a comfortable armchair with the ease of the deliberately unemployed, perhaps reading more of the novel I had begun the week before, or even dozing. The kitchen, under the stimulus of this prospect, began to glow; with a swosh of the dish-rag I banished that endless vista of employers, all briefly staring at me, never hiring, if hiring firing, throwing me a word of cheer as they swiveled to show me their backs. And I drew a neat firm X across the face of the female Pop-eye in the employment agency, that human calliope who, undetermined whether I am a round peg to drive into a square hole or the contrary, steams out one nonsensical suggestion after the next.

I smiled faintly at the sounds of the d.w. tidying the sitting-room so that it would be ready for me to compose my letters. She was plumping the pillows, three plumps per pillow, and when she came into the kitchen to polish the ashtrays, I was

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the picture of a model husband. She smiled a brave filmy smile, and I smiled back. I had taken the towel from around my waist, hanging it up to dry, and was reviewing my labors, adding a touch here and there, when I recalled the ice-box pan, one of the little anachronisms of our inexpensive flat. My spirits sank. As I bent down, pulling the pan out gently so as not to spill, certain features of my holiday which I had conveniently overlooked sprang into prominence. "Not so fast, young man," said Society to the unusual individual as he was making his escape. I had forgot the husky class-mate who was bound to discover me in the library, just as if he had come there for that purpose. His mission is to tell me that he has settled for a "pretty decent job in a good-enough firm." Once more I heard the boom of the bald uncle in the brown-checked suit. Jovially he bounds forth. "Well, young fellow, see you in here quite a bit. Nice place to work, always found it so. What's that you're boneing up on? *Great Scott!* Reading novels in the daytime!" Later, his plump pink forefinger wagging, he returns. " '*Otium Catulle tibi molestum est*,' as the poet warns us." Ha, ha. As I dumped the brimming pan down the drain, I splashed a full pint of water over my fly as could have been expected. *Drip-drip*, click-cup, *plump-plump*, tick-tock, boom-boom, splash. It's all as if I had known it in a previous existence. I gave way to self-pity. This rat race would run on forever.

Enter Boris. His door opened as I was walking toward the desk in the sitting-room. Standing on the threshold, he scratched at a spot on the sleeve of his well-known herringbone. One careful hand held on to the middle-aged snap-brim he puts back into its tissue-lined box after every wearing, and a fresh cigarette marked the dead center of his mouth. "Good-bye, Boris," said the d.w., flashing another filmy smile at her comrade while folding the papers and stacking them in the wood-basket. Boris rocked from one foot to the other, bobbed his head, and moved toward the hall door. I stood by the desk and stared down at the Classified, expressly detached for me. There could never be a

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time, I knew, when I could be more dejected than this. I wondered how many seconds it would be before Boris said *Ciao*. The idea that he might not say it, that Boris's habits were capable of alteration, did not present itself. With my back turned toward him, I simply waited. By now he must be almost at the door. He would be feeling for the knob with one hand and adjusting his hat and stroking its red feather with the other. He would be twisting at the knob. His hand was beginning to rise in that gesture of farewell; the poor stump of a candle in his head was spluttering to take light; his stubby hand was waving. Surely, he was already smiling his bright, strained, ghastly smile. "*Ciao*," said Boris. Oh God, I wish it were a bullet with which he shot me dead.

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TWO POEMS by THOM GUNN

A SCHOOL OF RESISTANCE

The ice plant is not in flower:
it extends, a springy floor

over the rocks and the sand
for whoever rests here and

watches the sea's explosion
below this point: crash, crash. On

waves, farther out, the gulls roost.
Cold hard light, from this I must

always begin, to see clear
the look of mid-December.

Nothing unifies the place
but the chilly blown dryness.

In late spring the ice plant will
break into mild stars: meanwhile

for this weed, *to endure* is
to grow. Three flat surfaces

make each of the leaves seem a
stem, bulging and greenish-grey,

though they are like leaves pointed.
Snap them, they are moist inside.

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BONHEUR

(effects of mescalin)

I

My body trots semblably
on Market Street. I control
the singular spy from my
hovering other planet: I
contemplate new laws meanwhile.

According to which it is
not a thoroughfare below
but a sweet compact. I choose
as if for the first time this
as the world I'll return to.

II

Not yet. I am distinct. I
am now afflicted with thirst
heat and cold, bombarded by
rockets that explode greenly,
harried by shapes, cramped. The worst

is, I am still on my own.
The street's total is less near
during my long ordeal than
the turbanned legends within
my world of serried color.

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TWO POEMS by DONALD DAVIE

LETTER TO CURTIS BRADFORD

Curtis, you've been American too long,
You don't know what it feels like. You belong,
Don't you, too entirely to explain?
You wheeled a 'bike, meeting us off the train.
I ask you! Who, besides the Bradfords, are
Licensed in Iowa not to run a car,
Like all the rest? Or are there names perhaps
In Iowa still, to match the names on maps,
Burgundian or Picard voyageurs
Prowling the wilderness for France and furs
On the Des Moines river? It should seem New France,
Not your New England, has pre-eminence
If to belong means anything. But your smile
(Twisted) admits it doesn't. Steadily, while
You on the seaboard, they in Canada
Dribbled from floods of European war
Boiled in small pools, pressure built up behind
The dams of Europe. Dispossessed mankind,
Your destined countrymen, milled at dock-gates;
Emigrant schooners spilled aboard the States;
The dispossessed, the not to be possessed,
The alone and equal, peopled all the West.
Curtis, what is it I am asking for,
Sipping these names? Dahcotah, Ottawa,
Horse Indian ... Yes, but earlier. Who was he
Leased both Dakotas to La Vérendrye?
Who first put up America to let?
You of the old stock paid him rent. And yet
Even so soon, crowds of the other sort
Piled off the boats to take him by assault.
And the heroes came. Self-driven, who but they,
For whom the manifest was shadow-play
Of an all-absorbing inward war and plight,
Could so deny its presence and its right?
It was the given. But I only guess,

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I guess at it out of my Englishness
And envy you out of England. Man with man
Is all our history; American,
You met with spirits. Neither white nor red
The melancholy, disinherited
Spirit of mid-America, but this,
The manifested copiousness, the bounties.

LASALLE & THE DISCOVERY OF THE GREAT WEST

Of this aspiring burgher who disdained
(Dumb in his pride of mortified reserve)
The usufruct of half a continent,
After the dark inexorable river
Delivered him the salt breath of the sea,
Still we complain: Dark it was not, until
He made it so, inexorable, nor fatal.

He loved solitude and he loved power
And Parkman loves him for it. Better love
Profit: if no principle nor faith
Move his lids' mountains, cannot Trade unsheet
The gathered waters of five inland oceans,
A prodigal Nature's parks and pleasure grounds,
Wild swans, wild turkeys, cranes and pelicans?

He never saw it, any of it; saw
The Mississippi that was bright, as dark,
Indifferent, as inexorable; saw
(As if in those accounts he never kept)
Digits and proxies, lean alternatives
To audiences with a Monseigneur
Where he had lacked complaisance and address.

He loved solitude and he loved power
And lonely as when born of chaos, bright
Voiceless, sail-less, without sign of life
The great Gulf opened, tossing—but what for?
Not for the Faith, for glory or for France
Whirled on the miry vortex of his need
The light canoes of Indian nations foundered.

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THE VOYAGE

I

For the child playing with his globe and stamps,
the planet equals its rapacity--
how grand the world in the light of the lamps,
how small in the blue day of maturity!

One morning we set sail, giddy with brave
predjudices, judgements, ingenuity--
we swing with the velvet swell of the wave,
our infinite is rocked by the fixed sea.

Some wish to fly a cheapness they detest,
others their crades' terror--others stand
sky-watching the great arc of a woman's breast,
reptilian Circe with her junk and wand.

Not to be changed to reptiles, such men crave
themselves with spaces, light, the burning sky;
cold toughens them, they bronze in the sun's blaze,
and dry the sores of their debauchery.

But the true voyagers are those who move
simply to move--balloons; their heart
is a sick motor thumping in one groove,
their irrational scream is, "Let's depart!"

Oh conscripts lusting for the first fire of the guns,
our sciences have never learned to tag
your dreams--unfathomable, enormous, vague
hopes grease the gears of these automatons.

A page of manuscript from Robert Lowell's translation of Baudelaire's Le Voyage

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— *Hans Beck*

THE ART OF POETRY III

ROBERT LOWELL

On one wall of Mr. Lowell's study was a large portrait of Ezra Pound, the tried, haughty outlines of the face concentrated as in the raised outlines of a ring-seal in an enlargement. Also bearded, but on another wall, over the desk, James Russell Lowell looked down from a gray old-fashioned photograph on the apex of the triangle thus formed, where his great-grand-nephew sat and answered questions.

Mr. Lowell had been talking about the classes he teaches at Boston University.

Four floors below the study window, cars whined through the early spring rain on Marlborough Street toward the Boston Public Garden.

INTERVIEWER

What are you teaching now?

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LOWELL

I'm teaching one of these poetry writing classes and a course in the novel. The course in the novel is called Practical Criticism. It's a course I teach every year, but the material changes. It could be anything from Russian short stories to Baudelaire, a study of the New Critics, or just fiction. I do whatever I happen to be working on myself.

INTERVIEWER

Has your teaching over the last few years meant anything to you as a writer?

LOWELL

It's meant a lot to me as a human being, I think. But my teaching is part time and has neither the merits nor the burdens of real teaching. Teaching is entirely different from writing. You're always up to it, or more or less up to it; there's no question of it's clogging, of it's not coming. It's much less subjective, and it's a very pleasant pursuit in itself. In the kind of teaching I do, conversational classes, seminars, if the students are good, which they've been most of the time, it's extremely entertaining. Now I don't know what it has to do with writing. You review a lot of things that you like, and you read things that you haven't read or haven't read closely, and read them aloud, go into them much more carefully than you would otherwise: and that must teach you a good deal. But there's such a jump from teaching to writing.

INTERVIEWER

Well, do you think the academic life is liable to block up the writer-professor's sensitivity to his own intuitions.

LOWELL

I think it's impossible to give a general answer. Almost all the poets of my generation, all the best ones, teach. I only know one, Elizabeth Bishop, who doesn't. They do it for a livelihood, but they also do it because you can't write poetry

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all the time. They do it to extend themselves, and I think it's undoubtedly been a gain to them. Now the question is whether something else might be more of a gain. Certainly the danger of teaching is that it's much too close to what you're doing—close and not close. You can get expert at teaching and be crude in practice. The revision, the consciousness that tinkers with the poem—that has something to do with teaching and criticism. But the impulse that starts a poem and makes it of any importance is distinct from teaching.

INTERVIEWER

And protected, you think, from whatever you bring to bear in the scrutiny of parts of poems and aspects of novels, etc.?

LOWELL

I think you have to tear it apart from that. Teaching may make the poetry even more different, less academic than it would be otherwise. I'm sure that writing isn't a craft, that is, something for which you learn the skills and go on turning out. It must come from some deep impulse, deep inspiration. That can't be taught, it can't be what you use in teaching. And you may go further afield looking for that than you would if you didn't teach. I don't know, really; the teaching probably makes you more cautious, more self-conscious, makes you write less. It may make you bolder when you do write.

INTERVIEWER

You think the last may be so?

LOWELL

The boldness is ambiguous. It's not only teaching, it's growing up in this age of criticism which we're all so conscious of, whether we like it or don't like it, or practice it or don't practice it. You think three times before you put a word down, and ten times about taking it out. And that's related to boldness: if you put words down they must do

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something, you're not going to put cliches. But then it's related to caution: you write much less.

INTERVIEWER

You yourself have written very little criticism, haven't you? You did once contribute to a study of Hopkins.

LOWELL

Yes, and I've done a few omnibus reviews. I do a review or two a year.

INTERVIEWER

You did a wonderful one of Richards' poems.

LOWELL

I felt there was an occasion for that, and I had something to say about it. Sometimes I wish I did more, but I'm very anxious in criticism not to do the standard analytical essay. I'd like my essay to be much sloppier and more intuitive. But my friends are critics, and most of them poet-critics. When I was twenty and learning to write, Allen Tate, Eliot, Blackmur, and Winters, and all those people were very much news. You waited for their essays, and when a good critical essay came out it had the excitement of a new imaginative work.

INTERVIEWER

Which is really not the case with any of the critics writing today, do you think?

LOWELL

The good critics are almost all the old ones. The most brilliant critic of my generation, I think, was Jarrell, and he in a way connects with that older generation. But he's writing less criticism now than he used to.

INTERVIEWER

In your schooling at St. Mark's and Harvard—we can talk

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about Kenyon in a minute—were there teachers or friends who had an influence on your writing, not so much by the example of their own writing as by personal supervision or direction—by suggesting certain reading, for instance?

LOWELL

Well, my school had been given a Carnegie set of art books, and I had a friend, Frank Parker, who had great talent as a painter but who'd never done it systematically. We began reading the books and histories of art, looking at reproductions, tracing the Last Supper on tracing paper, studying dynamic symmetry, learning about Cézanne, and so on. I had no practical interest in painting, but that study seemed rather close to poetry. And from there I began. I think I read Elizabeth Drew or some such book on modern poetry. It had free verse in it, and that seemed very simple to do.

INTERVIEWER

What class were you in then?

LOWELL

It was my last year. I'd wanted to be a football player very much, and got my letter but didn't make the team. Well, that was satisfying but crushing too. I read a good deal, but had never written. So this was a recoil from that. Then I had some luck in that Richard Eberhart was teaching there.

INTERVIEWER

I'd thought he'd been a student there with you.

LOWELL

No, he was a young man about thirty. I never had him in class, but I used to go to him. He'd read aloud and we'd talk, he was very pleasant that way. He'd smoke honey-scented tobacco, and read Baudelaire and Shakespeare and Hopkins —it made the thing living—and he'd read his own poems. I wrote very badly at first, but he was encouraging and

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enthusiastic. That probably was decisive, that there was someone there whom I admired who was engaged in writing poetry.

INTERVIEWER

I heard that a very early draft of "The Drunken Fisherman" appeared in the St. Mark's magazine.

LOWELL

No, it was the Kenyon college magazine that published it. The poem was very different then. I'd been reading Winters, whose model was Robert Bridges, and what I wanted was a rather distant, quiet, classical poem without any symbolism. It was in four-foot couplets as smooth as I could write them. The *Kenyon Review* had published a poem of mine and then they'd stopped. This was the one time they said, if you'd submitted this we'd have taken it.

INTERVIEWER

Then you were submitting other poems to the Review?

LOWELL

Yes, and that poem was rather different from anything else I did. I was also reading Hart Crane and Thomas and Tate and Empson's *Seven Types of Ambiguity*; and each poem was more difficult than the one before, and had more ambiguities. Ransom, editing the *Kenyon Review*, was impressed, but didn't want to publish them. He felt they were forbidding and clotted.

INTERVIEWER

But finally he did come through.

LOWELL

Well, after I'd graduated. I published when I was a Junior, then for about three years no magazine would take anything I did. I'd get sort of pleasant letters—"One poem in this group interests us, if you can get seven more." At that time

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it took me about a year to do two or three poems. Gradually I just stopped, and really sort of gave it up. I seemed to have reached a great impasse. The kind of poem I thought was interesting and would work on became so cluttered and overdone that it wasn't really poetry.

INTERVIEWER

I was struck on reading *Land of Unlikeness* by the difference between the poems you rejected for *Lord Weary's Castle* and the few poems and passages that you took over into the new book.

LOWELL

I think I took almost a third, but almost all of what I took was rewritten. But I wonder what struck you?

INTERVIEWER

One thing was that almost all the rejected poems seemed to me to be those that Tate, who in his introduction spoke about two kinds of poetry in the book, said were the more strictly religious and strictly symbolic poems, as against the poems he said were perhaps more powerful because more experienced or relying more on your sense of history. What you took seemed really superior to what you left behind.

LOWELL

Yes, I took out several that were paraphrases of early Christian poems, and I rejected one rather dry abstraction, then whatever seemed to me to have a messy violence. All the poems have religious imagery, I think, but the ones I took were more concrete. That's what the book was moving toward: less symbolic imagery. And as I say, I tried to take some of the less fierce poems. There seemed to be too much twisting and disgust in the first book.

INTERVIEWER

I wondered how wide your reading had been at the time. I wondered, when I read in Tate's introduction that the

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stanza in one of your poems was based on the stanza in "The Virginian Voyages," whether someone had pointed out Drayton's poem to you.

LOWELL

Tate and I started to make an anthology together. It was a very interesting year I spent with Tate and his wife. He's a poet who writes in spurts, and he had about a third of a book. I was going to do a biography of Jonathan Edwards and he was going to write a novel, and our wives were going to write novels. Well, the wives just went humming away. "I've just finished three pages," they'd say at the end of the day; and their books mounted up. But ours never did, though one morning Allen wrote four pages to his novel, very brilliant. We were in a little study together separated by a screen. I was heaping up books on Jonathan Edwards and taking notes, and getting more and more numb on the subject, looking at old leather-bound volumes on freedom of the will and so on, and feeling less and less a calling. And there we stuck. And then we decided to make an anthology together. We both liked rather formal, difficult poems, and we were reading particularly the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries. In the evening we'd read aloud, and we started a card catalogue of what we'd make for the anthology. And then we started writing. It seems to me we took old models like Drayton's Ode—Tate wrote a poem called "The Young Proconsuls of the Air" in that stanza. I think there's a trick to formal poetry. Most poetry is very formal, but when a modern poet is formal he gets more attention for it than old poets did. Somehow we've tried to make it look difficult. For example, Shelley can just rattle off terza rima by the page, and it's very smooth, doesn't seem an obstruction to him—you sometimes wish it were more difficult. Well someone does that today and in modern style it looks as though he's wrestling with every line and may be pushed into confusion, as though he's having a real struggle with form and content. Marks of that are in the finished poem. And I think both Tate and I felt that we wanted our formal

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patterns to seem a hardship and something that we couldn't rattle off easily.

INTERVIEWER

But in *Lord Weary's Castle* there were poems moving toward a sort of narrative calm, almost a prose calm—"Katherine's Dream," for example, or the two poems on texts by Edwards, or "The Ghost"—and then, on the other hand, poems in which the form was insisted upon and maybe shown off, and where the things that were characteristic of your poetry at that time—the kind of enjambments, the rhyming, the meters, of course—seem willed and forced, so that you have a terrific log-jam of stresses, meanings, strains.

LOWELL

I know one contrast I've felt, and it takes different forms at different times. The ideal modern form seems to be the novel and certain short stories. Maybe Tolstoy would be the perfect example—his work is imagistic, it deals with all experience, and there seems to be no conflict of the form and content. So one thing is to get into poetry that kind of human richness in rather simple descriptive language. Then there's another side of poetry: compression, something highly rhythmical and perhaps wrenched into a small space. I've always been fascinated by both these things. But getting it all on one page in a few stanzas, getting it all done in as little space as possible, revising and revising so that each word and rhythm though not perfect is pondered and wrestled with—you can't do that in prose very well, you'd never get your book written. "Katherine's Dream" was a real dream. I found that I shaped it a bit, and cut it, and allegorized it, but still it was a dream someone had had. It was material that ordinarily, I think, would go into prose, yet it would have had to be much longer or part of something much longer.

INTERVIEWER

I think you can either look for forms, you can do specific

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reading for them, or the forms can be demanded by what you want to say. And when the material in poetry seems under almost unbearable pressure you wonder whether the form hasn't cookie-cut what the poet wanted to say. But you chose the couplet, didn't you, and some of your freest passages are in couplets.

LOWELL

The couplet I've used is very much like the couplet Browning uses in "My Last Duchess," in *Sordello*, run-on with its rhymes buried. I've always, when I've used it, tried to give the impression that I had as much freedom in choosing the rhyme word as I had in any of the other words. Yet they were almost all true rhymes, and maybe half the time there'd be a pause after the rhyme. I wanted something as fluid as prose; you wouldn't notice the form, yet looking back you'd find that great obstacles had been climbed. And the couplet is pleasant in this way—once you've got your two lines to rhyme, then that's done and you can go on to the next. You're not stuck with the whole stanza to round out and build to a climax. A couplet can be a couplet or can be split and left as one line, or it can go on for a hundred lines; any sort of compression or expansion is possible. And that's not so in a stanza. I think a couplet's much less lyrical than a stanza, closer to prose. Yet it's an honest form, its difficulties are in the open. It really is pretty hard to rhyme each line with the one that follows it.

INTERVIEWER

Did the change of style in *Life Studies* have something to do with working away from that compression and pressure by way of, say, the kind of prose clarity of "Katherine's Dream?"

LOWELL

Yes. By the time I came to *Life Studies* I'd been writing my autobiography and also writing poems that broke meter. I'd been doing a lot of reading aloud. I went on a trip to the

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West Coast and read at least once a day and sometimes twice for fourteen days, and more and more I found that I was simplifying my poems. If I had a Latin quotation I'd translate it into English. If adding a couple of syllables in a line made it clearer I'd add them, and I'd make little changes just impromptu as I read. That seemed to improve the reading.

INTERVIEWER

Can you think of a place where you added a syllable or two to an otherwise regular line?

LOWELL

It was usually articles and prepositions that I added, very slight little changes, and I didn't change the printed text. It was just done for the moment.

INTERVIEWER

Why did you do this? Just because you thought the most important thing was to get the poem over?

LOWELL

To get it over, yes. And I began to have a certain disrespect for the tight forms. If you could make it easier by adding syllables, why not? And then when I was writing *Life Studies*, a good number of the poems were started in very strict meter, and I found that, more than the rhymes, the regular beat was what I didn't want. I have a long poem in there about my father, called "Commander Lowell," which actually is largely in couplets, but I originally wrote perfectly strict four-foot couplets. Well, with that form it's hard not to have echoes of Marvell. That regularity just seemed to ruin the honesty of sentiment, and became rhetorical; it said, "I'm a poem"—though it was a great help when I was revising having this original skeleton. I could keep the couplets where I wanted them and drop them where I didn't; there'd be a form to come back to.

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INTERVIEWER

Had you originally intended to handle all that material in prose?

LOWELL

Yes. I found it got awfully tedious working out transitions and putting in things that didn't seem very important but were necessary to the prose continuity. Also, I found it hard to revise. Cutting it down into small bits, I could work on it much more carefully and make fast transitions. But there's another point about this mysterious business of prose and poetry, form and content, and the reasons for breaking forms. I don't think there's any very satisfactory answer. I seesaw back and forth between something highly metrical and something highly free; there isn't any one way to write. But it seems to me we've gotten into a sort of Alexandrian age. Poets of my generation and particularly younger ones have gotten terribly proficient at these forms. They write a very musical, difficult poem with tremendous skill, perhaps there's never been such skill. Yet the writing seems divorced from culture somehow. It's become too much something specialized that can't handle much experience. It's become a craft, purely a craft, and there must be some breakthrough back into life. Prose is in many ways better off than poetry. It's quite hard to think of a young poet who has the vitality, say, of Salinger or Saul Bellow. Yet prose tends to be very diffuse. The novel is really a much more difficult form than it seems; few people have the wind to write anything that long. Even a short story demands almost poetic perfection. Yet on the whole prose is less cut off from life than poetry is. Now some of this Alexandrian poetry is very brilliant, you would not have it changed at all. But I thought it was getting increasingly stifling. I couldn't get my experience into tight metrical forms.

INTERVIEWER

So you felt this about your own poetry, your own technique, not just about the general condition of poetry?

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LOWELL

Yes, I felt that the meter plastered difficulties and mannerisms on what I was trying to say to such an extent that it terribly hampered me.

INTERVIEWER

This then explains, in part anyway, your admiration for Elizabeth Bishop's poetry. I know that you've said the qualities and the abundance of its descriptive language reminded you of the Russian novel more than anything else.

LOWELL

Any number of people are guilty of writing a complicated poem that has a certain amount of symbolism in it and really difficult meaning, a wonderful poem to teach. Then you unwind it and you feel that the intelligence, the experience, whatever goes into it, is skin-deep. In Elizabeth Bishop's "Man-Moth" a whole new world is gotten out and you don't know what will come after any one line. It's exploring. And it's as original as Kafka. She's gotten a world, not just a way of writing. She seldom writes a poem that doesn't have that exploratory quality; yet it's very firm, it's not like beat poetry, it's all controlled.

INTERVIEWER

What about Snodgrass? What you were trying to do in *Life Studies* must have something to do with your admiration for his work.

LOWELL

He did these things before I did, though he's younger than I am and had been my student. He may have influenced me, though people have suggested the opposite. He spent ten years at the University of Iowa, going to writing classes, being an instructor; rather unworldly, making little money, and specializing in talking to other people writing poetry, obsessed you might say with minute technical problems and rather provincial experience—and then he wrote about just

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that. I mean, the poems are about his child, his divorce, and Iowa City, and his child is a Dr. Spock child—all handled in expert little stanzas. I believe that's a new kind of poetry. Other poems that are direct that way are slack and have no vibrance. His experience wouldn't be so interesting and valid if it weren't for the whimsy, the music, the balance, everything revised and placed and pondered. All that gives light to those poems on agonizing subjects comes from the craft.

INTERVIEWER

And yet his best poems are all on the verge of being slight and even sentimental.

LOWELL

I think a lot of the best poetry is. Laforgue—it's hard to think of a more delightful poet, and his prose is wonderful too. Well, it's on the verge of being sentimental, and if he hadn't dared to be sentimental he wouldn't have been a poet. I mean, his inspiration was that. There's some way of distinguishing between false sentimentality, which is blowing up a subject and giving emotions that you don't feel, and using whimsical, minute, tender, small emotions that most people don't feel but which Laforgue and Snodgrass do. So that I'd say he had pathos and fragility—but then that's a large subject too. He has fragility along the edges and a main artery of power going through the center.

INTERVIEWER

Some people were disappointed with *Life Studies* just because earlier you had written a kind of heroic poetry, an American version of heroic poetry, of which there had been none recently except your own. Is there any chance that you will go back to that?

LOWELL

I don't think that a personal history can go on forever, unless you're Walt Whitman and have a way with you. I feel I've done enough personal poetry. That doesn't mean I won't

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do more of it, but I don't want to do more now. I feel I haven't gotten down all my experience, or perhaps even the most important part, but I've said all I really have much inspiration to say, and more would just dilute. So that you need something more impersonal, and other things being equal it's better to get your emotions out in a Macbeth than in a confession. Macbeth must have tons of Shakespeare in him. We don't know where, nothing in Shakespeare's life was remotely like Macbeth, yet he somehow gives the feeling of going to the core of Shakespeare. You have much more freedom that way than you do when you write an autobiographical poem.

INTERVIEWER

These poems, I gather from what you said earlier, did take as much working over as the earlier ones.

LOWELL

They were just as hard to write. They're not always factually true. There's a good deal of tinkering with fact. You leave out a lot, and emphasize this and not that. Your actual experience is a complete flux. I've invented facts and changed things, and the whole balance of the poem was something invented. So there's a lot of artistry, I hope, in the poems. Yet there's this thing: if a poem is autobiographical—and this is true of any kind of autobiographical writing and of historical writing—you want the reader to say, this is true. In something like Macauley's *History of England* you think you're really getting William III. That's as good as a good plot in a novel. And so there was always that standard of truth which you wouldn't ordinarily have in poetry—the reader was to believe he was getting the *real* Robert Lowell.

INTERVIEWER

I wanted to ask you about this business of taking over passages from earlier poems and rewriting them and putting them in new contexts. I'm thinking of the passage at the end

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of the "Cistercians in Germany," in *Land of Unlikeness*, which you rewrote into those wonderful lines that end "At the Indian Killer's Grave." I know that Hart Crane rewrote early scraps a great deal and used most of the rewrites. But doesn't doing this imply a theory of poetry that would talk much more about craft than about experience?

LOWELL

I don't know, it's such a miracle if you get lines that are halfway right; it's not just a technical problem. The lines must mean a good deal to you. All your poems are in a sense one poem, and there's always the struggle of getting something that balances and comes out right, in which all parts are good, and that has experience that you value. And so if you have a few lines that shine in a poem or are beginning to shine, and they fail and get covered over and drowned, maybe their real form is in another poem. Maybe you've mistaken the real inspiration in the original poem and they belong in something else entirely. I don't think that violates experience. The "Cistercians" wasn't very close to me, but the last lines seemed felt; I dropped the Cistercians and put a Boston graveyard in.

INTERVIEWER

But in Crane's "Ode to an Urn," a poem about a personal friend, there are lines which originally applied to something very different, and therefore, in one version or the other, at least can't be called personal.

LOWELL

I think we always bring over some unexplained obscurities by shifting lines. Something that was clear in the original just seems odd and unexplained in the final poem. That can be quite bad, of course; but you always want—and I think Chekhov talks about this—the detail that you can't explain. It's just there. It seems right to you, but you don't have to have it; you could have something else entirely. Now if everything's like that you'd just have chaos, but a few un-

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explained difficult things—they seem to be the life-blood of variety—they may work. What may have seemed a little odd, a little difficult in the original poem, gets a little more difficult in a new way in the new poem. And that's purely accidental, yet you may gain more than you lose—a new suggestiveness and magic.

INTERVIEWER

Do you revise a very great deal?

LOWELL

Endlessly.

INTERVIEWER

You often use an idiom or a very common phrase either for the sake of irony or to bear more meaning than it's customarily asked to bear—do these come late in the game, do you have to look around for them?

LOWELL

They come later because they don't prove much in themselves, and they often replace something that's much more formal and worked-up. Some of my later poetry does have this quality that the earlier doesn't: several lines can be almost what you'd say in conversation. And maybe talking with a friend or with my wife I'd say, "This doesn't sound quite right," and sort of reach in the air as I talked and change a few words. In that way the new style is easier to write; I sometimes fumble out a natural sequence of lines that will work. But a whole poem won't come that way; my seemingly relaxed poems are just about as hard as the very worked-up ones.

INTERVIEWER

That rightness and familiarity, though, is in "Between the Porch and the Altar" in several passages which are in couplets.

LOWELL

When I am writing in meter I find the simple lines never

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come right away. Nothing does. I don't believe I've ever written a poem in meter where I've kept a single one of the original lines. Usually when I was writing my old poems I'd write them out in blank verse and then put in the rhymes. And of course I'd change the rhymes a lot. The most I could hope for at first was that the rhymed version wouldn't be much inferior to the blank verse. Then the real work would begin, to make it something much better than the original out of the difficulties of the meter.

INTERVIEWER

Have you ever gone as far as Yeats and written out a prose argument and then set down the rhymes?

LOWELL

With some of the later poems I've written out prose versions, then cut the prose down and abbreviated it. A rapidly written prose draft of the poem doesn't seem to do much good, too little pain has gone into it; but one really worked on is bound to have phrases that are invaluable. And it's a nice technical problem: how can you keep phrases and get them into meter?

INTERVIEWER

Do you usually send off your work to friends before publishing it?

LOWELL

I do it less now. I always used to do it, to Jarrell and one or two other people. Last year I did a lot of reading with Stanley Kunitz.

INTERVIEWER

At the time you were writing the poems for *Lord Weary's Castle*, did it make a difference to you whether the poet to whom you were sending your work was Catholic?

LOWELL

I don't think I ever sent any poems to a Catholic. The

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person I was closest to then was Allen Tate, who wasn't a Catholic at the time; and then later it became Jarrell, who wasn't at all Catholic. My two close Catholic writer friends are prose writers, J. F. Powers and Flannery O'Connor, and they weren't interested in the technical problems of poems.

INTERVIEWER

So you feel that the religion is the business of the poem that it's in and not at all the business of the Church or the religious person.

LOWELL

It shouldn't be. I mean, a religion ought to have objective validity. But by the time it gets into a poem it's so mixed up with technical and imaginative problems that the theologian, the priest, the serious religious person isn't of too much use. The poem is too strange for him to feel at home and make any suggestions.

INTERVIEWER

What does this make of the religious poem as a religious exercise?

LOWELL

Well, it at least makes this: that the poem tries to be a poem and not a piece of artless religious testimony. There is a drawback. It seems to me that with any poem, but maybe particularly a religious one where there are common interests, the opinion of intelligent people who are not poets ought to be useful. There's an independence to this not getting advice from religious people and outsiders, but also there's a narrowness. Then there is a question whether my poems are religious, or whether they just use religious imagery. I haven't really any idea. My last poems don't use religious imagery, they don't use symbolism. In many ways they seem to me more religious than the early ones, which are full of symbols and references to Christ and God. I'm sure the symbols and the Catholic framework didn't make the poems religious experiences. Yet I don't feel my experience changed very much. It seems to me it's clearer to me now than

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it was then, but it's very much the same sort of thing that went into the religious poems—the same sort of struggle, light and darkness, the flux of experience. The morality seems much the same. But the symbolism is gone; you couldn't possibly say what creed I believed in. I've wondered myself often. Yet what made the earlier poems valuable seems to be some recording of experience, and that seems to be what makes the later ones.

INTERVIEWER

So you end up saying that the poem does have some integrity and can have some beauty apart from the beliefs expressed in the poem.

LOWELL

I think it can only have integrity apart from the beliefs; that no political position, religious position, position of generosity, or what have you, can make a poem good. It's all to the good if a poem *can* use politics, or theology, or gardening, or anything that has its own validity aside from poetry. But these things will never *per se* make a poem.

INTERVIEWER

The difficult question is whether when the beliefs expressed in a poem are obnoxious the poem as a whole can be considered to be beautiful—the problem of the *Pisan Cantos*.

LOWELL

The *Pisan Cantos* are very uneven, aren't they? If you took what most people would agree are maybe the best hundred passages, would the beliefs in those passages be obnoxious? I think you'd get a very mixed answer. You could make quite a good case for Pound's good-humor about his imprisonment, his absence of self-pity, his observant eye, his memories of literary friends, for all kinds of generous qualities and open qualities and lyrical qualities that anyone would think were good. And even when he does something like the death of Mussolini, in the passage that opens the

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Pisan Cantos, people debate about it. I've talked to Italians who were partisans, and who said that this is the only poem on Mussolini that's any good. Pound's quite wily often: Mussolini hung up like an ox—his brutal appearance. I don't know whether you could say the beliefs there are wrong or not. And there are other poems that come to mind: in Eliot, the Jew spelled with a small j in "Gerontion," is that anti-semitism or not? Eliot's not anti-semitic in any sense, but there's certainly a dislike of Jews in those early poems. Does he gain in the fierceness of writing his Jew with a small j? He says you write what you have to write and in criticism you can say what you think you should believe in. Very ugly emotions perhaps make a poem.

INTERVIEWER

You were on the Bollingen Committee at the time the award was made to Pound. What did you think of the great ruckus?

LOWELL

I thought it was a very simple problem of voting for the best book of the year; and it seemed to me Pound's was. I thought the *Pisan Cantos* was the best writing Pound had ever done, though it included some of his worst. It is a very mixed book: that was the question. But the consequences of not giving the best book of the year a prize for extraneous reasons, even terrible ones in a sense—I think that's the death of art. Then you have Pasternak suppressed and everything becomes stifling. Particularly in a strong country like ours you've got to award things objectively and not let the beliefs you'd like a man to have govern your choice. It was very close after the war, and anyone must feel that the poetry award was a trifling thing compared with the concentration camps. I actually think they were very distant from Pound. He had no political effect whatsoever and was quite eccentric and impractical. Pound's Social Credit, his Fascism, all these various things, were a tremendous gain to him; he'd be a very Parnassan poet without them. Even if they're bad beliefs—and some were bad, some weren't, and some were

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just terrible, of course—they made him more human and more to do with life, more to do with the times. They served him. Taking what interested him in these things gave a kind of realism and life to his poetry that it wouldn't have had otherwise.

INTERVIEWER

Did you become a translator to suit your own needs or because you wanted to get certain poems, most of them not before translated, into English? Or was it a matter of both, as I suppose it usually is, and as it was for Pound?

LOWELL

I think both. It always seemed to me that nothing very close to the poems I've translated existed in English; and on the other hand, there was some kind of closeness, I felt a kinship. I felt some sort of closeness to the Rilke and Rimbaud poems I've translated, yet they were doing things I couldn't do. They were both a continuation of my own bias and an release from myself.

INTERVIEWER

How did you come to translate Propertius—in fact, how did you come to have such a great interest in Roman history and Latin literature?

LOWELL

At Harvard my second year I took almost entirely English courses—the easiest sort of path. I think that would have been a disaster. But before going to Kenyon I talked to Ford Madox Ford and Ransom, and Ransom said you've just got to take philosophy and logic, which I did. The other thing he suggested was classics. Ford was rather flippant about it, said of course you've got to learn classics, you'll just cut yourself off from humanity if you don't. I think it's always given me some sort of yardstick for English. And then the literature was amazing, particularly the Greek; there's nothing like Greek in English at all. Our plays aren't formally at all like Aeschylus and Sophocles. Their whole inspiration was un-

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believably different, and so different that you could hardly think of even the attempt to imitate them, great as their prestige was. That something like *Antigone* or *Oedipus* or the great Achilles moments in the *Iliad* would be at the core of a literature is incredible for anyone brought up in an English culture—Greek wildness and sophistication all different, the women different, everything. Latin's of course much closer. English is a half-Latin language, and we've done our best to absorb the Latin literature. But a Roman poet is much less intellectual than the Englishman, much less abstract. He's nearer nature somehow—somewhat what we feel about a Frenchman but more so still. And yet he's very sophisticated. He has his way of doing things, though the number of forms he explored is quite limited. The amount he could take from the Greeks and yet change is an extraordinary piece of firm discipline. Also, you take almost any really good Roman poet—Juvenal, or Virgil, or Propertius, Catullus—he's much more raw and direct than anything in English, and yet he has this block-like formality. The Roman frankness interests me. Until recently our literature hasn't been as raw as the Roman, translations had to have stars. And their history has a terrible human frankness that isn't customary with us—corrosive attacks on the establishment, comments on politics and the decay of morals, all felt terribly strongly, by poets as well as historians. The English writer who reads the classics is working at one thing, and his eye is on something else that can't be done. We will always have the Latin and Greek classics, and they'll never be absorbed. There's something very restful about that.

INTERVIEWER

But more specifically, how did Latin poetry—your study of it, your translations—affect your measure of English poetry?

LOWELL

My favorite English poetry was the difficult Elizabethan plays and the Metaphysicals, then the Nineteenth century which I was aquiver about and disliked but which was closer

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to my writing than anything else. The Latin seemed very different from either of these. I immediately saw how Shelley wasn't like Horace and Virgil or Aeschylus—and the Latin was a mature poetry, a realistic poetry, which didn't have the contortions of the Metaphysicals. What a frail, bony, electric person Marvell is compared with Horace!

INTERVIEWER

What about your adaptation of Propertius?

LOWELL

I got him through Pound. When I read him in Latin I found a kind of Propertius you don't get in Pound at all. Pound 's Propertius is a rather Ovidian figure with a great deal of Pound's fluency and humor and irony. The actual Porpertius is a very excited, tense poet, rather desperate; his line is much more like parts of Marlowe's *Faustus*. And he's of all the Roman poets the most like a desperate Christian. His experiences, his love affair with Cynthia, are absolutely rending, destroying. He's like a fallen Christian.

INTERVIEWER

Have you done any other translations of Latin poems?

LOWELL

I did a monologue that started as a translation of Virgil and then was completely rewritten, and there are buried translations in several other poems. There's a poem called "To Speak of Woe That Is in Marriage" in my last book that started as a translation of Catullus. I don't know what traces are left, but it couldn't have been written without the Catullus.

INTERVIEWER

You've translated Pasternak. Do you know Russian?

LOWELL

No, I have rewritten other English translations, and seldom even checked with Russian experts. I want to get a book of

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translations together. I read in the originals, except for Russian, but I have felt quite free to alter things, and I don't know that Pasternak would look less close than the Italian, which I have studied closely. Before I publish, I want to check with a Russian expert.

INTERVIEWER

Can I get you back to Harvard for a minute? Is it true you tried out for the Harvard *Advocate*, did all the dirty work for your candidacy, and then were turned down?

LOWELL

I nailed a carpet down. I forget who the editor was then, but he was a man who wrote on Frost. At that time people who wrote on Frost were quite different from the ones who write on him now; they tended to be conservative, out of touch. I wasn't a very good writer then, perhaps I should have been turned down. I was trying to write like William Carlos Williams, very simple, free verse, imagistic poems. I had a little group I was very proud of which was set up in galleys; when I left Harvard it was turned down.

INTERVIEWER

Did you know any poets at the time?

LOWELL

I had a friend, Harry Brown, who writes the dialogue for movies and has been in Hollywood for years. He was a terribly promising poet. He came to Harvard with a long correspondence with Harriet Munro and was much more advanced than anyone else. He could write in the style of Auden or Webster or Eliot or Crane. He'd never graduated from high school, and wasn't a student, but he was the person I felt closest to. My other friends weren't writers.

INTERVIEWER

Had you met any older poets—Frost, for instance, who must have been around?

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LOWELL

I'd gone to call on Frost with a huge epic on the First Crusade, all written out in clumsy longhand on lined paper. He read a page of that and said, "You have no compression." Then he read me a very short poem of Collins, "How Sleep the Brave," and said, "That's not a great poem, but it's not too long." He was very kindly about it. You know his point about the voice coming into poetry: he took a very unusual example of that, the opening of *Hyperion*; the line about the Naiad, something about her pressing a cold finger to her cold lips, which wouldn't seem like a voice passage at all. And he said, "Now Keats comes alive here." That was a revelation to me; what had impressed me was the big Miltonic imitation in *Hyperion*. I don't know what I did with that, but I recoiled and realized that I was diffuse and monotonous.

INTERVIEWER

What decided you to leave Harvard and go to Kenyon?

LOWELL

I'd made the acquaintance of Merrill Moore, who'd been at Vanderbilt and a Fugitive. He said that I ought to study with a man who was a poet. He was very close to Ransom, and the plan was that I'd go to Vanderbilt; and I would have, but Ransom changed to Kenyon.

INTERVIEWER

I understand you left much against the wishes of your family.

LOWELL

Well, I was getting quite morose and solitary, and they sort of settled for this move. They'd rather have had me a genial social Harvard student, but at least I'd be working hard this way. It seemed to them a queer but orderly step.

INTERVIEWER

Did it help you that you had had intellectual and literary figures in your family?

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LOWELL

I really didn't know I'd had them till I went to the South. To my family, James Russell Lowell was the ambassador to England, not a writer. Amy seemed a bit peculiar to them. When I began writing I think it would have been unimaginable to take either Amy or James Russell Lowell as models.

INTERVIEWER

Was it through Ransom that you met Tate?

LOWELL

I met them at more or less the same time, but actually stayed with Tate before I knew Ransom very well.

INTERVIEWER

And Ford Madox Ford was there at some time, wasn't he?

LOWELL

I met Ford at a cocktail party in Boston and went to dinner with him at the Athens Olympia. He was going to visit the Tates, and said, "Come and see me down there, we're all going to Tennessee." So I drove down. He hadn't arrived, so I got to know the Tates quite well before his appearance.

INTERVIEWER

Staying in a pup-tent.

LOWELL

It's a terrible piece of youthful callousness. They had one Negro woman who came in and helped, but Mrs. Tate was doing all the housekeeping. She had three guests and her own family, and was doing the cooking and writing a novel. And this young man arrived, quite ardent and eccentric. I think I suggested that maybe I'd stay with them. And they said, "We really haven't any room, you'd have to pitch a tent on

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the lawn." So I went to Sears Roebuck and got a tent and rigged it on their lawn. The Tates were too polite to tell me that what they'd said had been just a figure of speech. I stayed two months in my tent and ate with the Tates.

INTERVIEWER

And you were showing him your work all the while.

LOWELL

Oh, I became converted to formalism and changed my style from brilliant free verse, all in two months. And everything was in rhyme, and it still wasn't any good. But that was a great incentive. I poured out poems and went to writers' conferences.

INTERVIEWER

What about Ford?

LOWELL

I saw him out there and took dictation from him for a while. That was hell because I didn't know how to type. I'd take the dictation down in longhand, and he rather mumbled. I'd ask him what he'd said, and he'd say, "Oh, you have no sense of prose rhythm," and mumble some more. I'd get most of his words, then I'd have to improvise on the typewriter.

INTERVIEWER

So for part of Ford's opus we're indebted to you.

LOWELL

A handful of phrases in *The March of Literature*, on the Provençal poets.

INTERVIEWER

That was the summer before you entered Kenyon; but most of the poems in *Land of Unlikeness* were written after you'd graduated, weren't they?

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LOWELL

Yes, they were almost all written in a year I spent with the Tates, though some of them were earlier poems rewritten. I think becoming a Catholic convert had a good deal to to with writing again. I was much more interested in being a Catholic than in being a writer. I read Catholic writers but had no intention of writing myself. But somehow, when I started again, I won't say the Catholicism gave me subject matter, but it gave me some kind of form, and I could begin a poem and build it to a climax. It was quite different from what I'd been doing earlier.

INTERVIEWER

Why, then, did you choose to print your work in the small liberal magazines whose religious and political positions were very different from yours? Have you ever submitted to the *New Yorker* or the *Atlantic Monthly*?

LOWELL

I think I may have given something to the *Atlantic* on Santayana; the *New Yorker* I haven't given anything. I think the *New Yorker* does some of the best prose in the country, in many ways much more interesting than the quarterlies and little magazines. But poems are lost in it: there's no table of contents, and some of their poetry is light verse. There's no particular continuity of excellence. There just seems no point in printing there. For a while the little magazines, whose religious-political positions *were* very different from mine, were the only magazines that would publish me, and I feel like staying with them. I like magazines like the *New Statesman*, the *Nation*, the *New Republic*—something a little bit off the track.

INTERVIEWER

Just because they are off the track?

LOWELL

I think so. A political position I don't necessarily agree with which is a little bit adverse seems to me just more

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attractive than a time-serving, conventional position. And they tend to have good reviews, those magazines. I think you write for a small audience, an ardent critical audience. And you know Graves says that poets ought to take in each other's washing because they're the only responsible audience. There's a danger to that—you get too specialized—but I pretty much agree that's the audience you do write for. If it gets further, that's all fine.

INTERVIEWER

There is, though, a certain inbred, in-group anemia to those magazines, at least to the literary quarterlies. For instance, it would have been almost inconceivable for *Partisan Review*, which is the best of them, I think, to give your last book a bad review or even a sharp review.

LOWELL

I think no magazine likes to slam one of its old contributors. *Partisan* has sometimes just not reviewed a book by someone they liked very much and their reviewer didn't. I know Shapiro has been attacked in *Partisan* and then published there, and other people have been unfavorably reviewed and made rather a point of sending them something afterwards. You want to feel there's a certain degree of poorer writing that wouldn't get published in the magazine your work appears in. The good small magazine may publish a lot of rather dry stuff, but at least it's serious, and if it's bad it's not bad by trying to be popular and put something over on the public. It's a wrenched personal ineptitude that will get published rather than a public slickness. I think that has something to do with good reviews coming out in the magazine. We were talking about *Partisan's* not slamming one of its contributors, but *Partisan* has a pretty harsh, hard standard of reviewing, and they certainly wouldn't praise one of their contributors who'd gone to pot.

INTERVIEWER

What poets among your contemporaries do you most admire?

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LOWELL

The two I've been closest to are Elizabeth Bishop—I spoke about her earlier—and Jarrell, and they're different. Jarrell's a great man of letters, a very informed man, and the best critic of my generation, the best professional poet. He's written the best war poems, and those poems are a tremendous product of our culture, I feel. Elizabeth Bishop's poems, as I said, are more personal, more something she did herself, and she's not a critic but has her own tastes which may be very idiosyncratic. I enjoy her poems more than anybody else's. I like some of Shapiro very much, some of Roethke and Stanley Kunitz.

INTERVIEWER

What about Roethke, who tries to do just about everything you don't try to do?

LOWELL

We've read to each other and argued, and may be rather alike in temperament actually, but he wants a very musical poem and always would quarrel with my ear as I'd quarrel with his eye. He has love poems and childhood poems and startling surrealistic poems, rather simple experience done with a blaze of power. He rejoices in the rhetoric and the metrics, but there's something very disorderly working there. Sometimes it will smash a poem and sometimes it will make it. The things he knows about I feel I know nothing about, flowers and so on. What we share, I think, is the exultant moment, the blazing out. Whenever I've tried to do anything like his poems, I've felt helpless and realized his mastery.

INTERVIEWER

You were apparently a very close friend of Delmore Schwartz's.

LOWELL

Yes, and I think that I've never met anyone who has some-

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how as much seeped into me. It's a complicated personal thing to talk about. His reading was very varied, Marx and Freud and Russell, very catholic and not from a conservative position at all. He sort of grew up knowing those things and has a wonderful penetrating humorous way of talking about them. If he met T. S. Eliot his impressions of Eliot would be mixed up with his impressions of Freud and what he'd read about Eliot; all these things flowed back and forth in him. Most of my writer friends were more specialized and limited than Schwartz, most of them took against the grain positions which were also narrow. Schwartz was a revelation. He felt the poet who had experience was very much better than the poet with polish. Wordsworth would interest him much more than Keats—he wanted openness to direct experience. He said that if you got people talking in a poem you could do anything. And his own writing, *Coriolanus* and *Shenandoah*, is interesting for that.

INTERVIEWER

Isn't this much what you were saying about your own hopes for *Life Studies*?

LOWELL

Yes, but technically I think that Delmore and I are quite different. There have been very few poets I've been able to get very much from technically. Tate has been one of the closest to me. My early poems I think grew out of my admiration for his poems.

INTERVIEWER

What about poets in the past?

LOWELL

It's hard for me to imitate someone; I'm very self-conscious about it. That's an advantage perhaps—you don't become too imitative—but it's also a limitation. I tremble when I feel I'm being like someone else. If it's Rilke or Rimbaud or Propertius, you know the language is a big bar and that if

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you imitate you're doing something else. I've felt greater freedom that way. I think I've tried to write like some of the Elizabethans.

INTERVIEWER

And Crane? You said you had read a good deal of Crane.

LOWELL

Yes, but his difficult style is one I've never been able to do much with. He can be very obscure and yet write a much more inspired poem than I could by being obscure. There's a relationship between Crane and Tate, and for some reason Tate was much easier for me. I could see how Tate was done, though Tate has a rhythm that I've never been able to imitate. He's much more irregular than I am, and I don't know where the rhythm comes from, but I admire it very much. Crane said somewhere that he could write five or six good lines but Tate could write twelve that would hang together, and you'd see how the twelve were built. Tate was somehow more of a model: he had a lot of wildness and he had a lot of construction. And of course I knew him and never knew Crane. I think Crane is the great poet of that generation. He got out more than anybody else. Not only is it the tremendous power there, but he somehow got New York City: he was at the center of things in the way that no other poet was. All the chaos of his life missed getting sidetracked the way other poets' did, and he was less limited than any other poet of his generation. There was a fulness of experience; and without that, if you just had his mannerisms, and not his rather simple writing — which if done badly would be sentimental merely or just his obscure writing, the whole thing would be merely verbal. It isn't with Crane. The push of the whole man is there. But his style never worked for me.

INTERVIEWER

But something of Crane does seem to have gotten into your work—or maybe it's just that sense of power thrashing

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about. I thought it had come from a close admiring reading of Crane.

LOWELL

Yes, some kind of wildness and power that appeals to me, I guess. But when I wrote difficult poems they weren't meant to be difficult, though I don't know that Crane meant his to be. I wanted to be loaded and rich, but I thought the poems were all perfectly logical. You can have a wonderful time explaining a great poem like "Voyages II," and it all can be explained, but in the end it's just a love poem with a great confusion of images that are emotionally clear; a prose paraphrase wouldn't give you any impression whatever of the poem. I couldn't do that kind of poem, I don't think; at least I've never been able to.

INTERVIEWER

You said that most of the writers you've known have been against the grain. What did you mean?

LOWELL

When I began writing most of the great writers were quite unpopular. They hadn't reached the universities yet, and their circulation was small. Even Eliot wasn't very popular then. But life seemed to be there. It seemed to be one of those periods when the lid was still being blown. The great period of blowing the lid was the time of Schoenberg and Picasso and Joyce and the early Eliot, where a power came into the arts which we perhaps haven't had since. These people were all rather traditional, yet they were stifled by what was being done, and they almost wrecked things to do their great works—even rather minor but very good writers such as Williams or Marianne Moore. Their kind of protest and queerness has hardly been repeated. They're wonderful writers. You wouldn't see anyone as strange as Marianne Moore again, not for a long while. Conservative and Jamesian as she is, it was a terrible, private, and strange revolutionary poetry. There isn't the motive to do that now.

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Yet those were the classics, and it seems to me they were all against the grain, Marianne Moore as much as Crane. That's where life was for the small audience. It would be a tremendous subject to say whether the feelings were against the grain too, and whether they were purifying, nihilistic, or both.

INTERVIEWER

Have you had much contact with Eliot?

LOWELL

I may have seen him a score of times in my life, and he's always been very kind. Long before he published me he had some of my poems in his files. There's some kind of New England connection.

INTERVIEWER

Has he helpfully criticized your work?

LOWELL

Just very general criticism. With the first book of mine Faber did he had a lot of little questions about punctuation, but he never said he liked this or disliked that. Then he said something about the last book: "These are first-rate, I mean it"—something like that that was very understated and gratifying. I feel Eliot's less tied to form than a lot of people he's influenced, and there's a freedom of the Twenties in his work that I find very sympathetic. Certainly he and Frost are the great New England poets. You hardly think of Stevens as New England, but you have to think of Eliot and Frost as deeply New England and puritanical. They're a continuation and a criticism of the tradition, and they're probably equally great poets. Frost somehow put life into a dead tradition. His kind of poetry must have seemed almost unpublishable, it was so strange and fresh when it was first written. But still it was old-fashioned poetry and really had nothing to do with modern writing—except that he is one of the greatest modern writers. Eliot was violently modern and unacceptable to the traditionalist. Now he's spoken of as

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a literary dictator, but he's handled his position with wonderful sharpness and grace, it seems to me. It's a narrow position and it's not one I hold particularly, but I think it's been held with extraordinary honesty and finish and development. Eliot has done what he said Shakespeare had done: all his poems are one poem, a form of continuity that has grown and snowballed.

INTERVIEWER

I remember Jarrell in reviewing *Mills of the Kavanaughs* said that Frost had been doing narrative poems with ease for years, and that nobody else had been able to catch up.

LOWELL

And what Jarrell said is true: nobody except Frost can do a sort of Chaucerian narrative poem that's organized and clear. Well, a lot of people do them, but the texture of their verse is so limp and uninspired. Frost does them with great power. Most of them were done early, in that *North of Boston* period. That was a miracle, because except for Robinson—and I think Frost is a very much greater poet than Robinson—no one was doing that in England or America.

INTERVIEWER

But you hadn't simply wanted to tell a story in *Mills of the Kavanaughs*.

LOWELL

No, I was writing an obscure, rather Elizabethan, dramatic and melodramatic poem. I don't know quite how to describe this business of direct experience. With Browning for instance, for all his gifts—and there is almost nothing Browning couldn't use—you feel there's a glaze between what he writes and what really happened, you feel the people are made up. In Frost you feel that's just what the farmers and so on were like. It has the virtue of a photograph but all the finish of art. That's an extraordinary thing, almost no other poet can do that now.

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INTERVIEWER

What do you suppose are the qualities that go into that ability?

LOWELL

I don't know. Prose writers have it much more, and quite a few prose writers have it. It's some kind of sympathy and observation of people. It's the deep, rather tragic poems that I value most. Perhaps it's been overdone with Frost, but there's an abundance and geniality about those poems that isn't tragic. With this sense of rhythm and words and composition, and getting into his lines language that is very much like the language he speaks—which is also a work of art, much better than other people's ordinary speech and yet natural to him; he has that continuity with his ordinary self and his poetic self—he's made what with anyone else would be just flat. A very good prose writer can do this and make something of it. You get it quite often in Faulkner. Though he's an Elizabethan sort of character, rather unlike Frost, he can get this amazing immediacy and simplicity. When it comes to verse the form is so hard that all of that gets drained out. In a very conventional old-fashioned writer, or someone who's trying to be realistic but also dramatic and inspired, though he may remain a good poet, most of that directness and realism goes. It's hard for Eliot to be direct that way, though you get it in bits of the *Wasteland*, that marvellous Cockney section. And he can be himself; I feel Eliot's real all through the *Quartets*. He can be very intelligent or very simple there, and *he's* there, but there are no other people in the *Quartets*.

INTERVIEWER

Have many of your poems been taken from real people and real events?

LOWELL

I think, except when I've used myself or occasionally named actual people in poems, the characters are purely imaginary. I've tried to buttress them by putting images

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I've actually seen and in indirect ways getting things I've actually experienced into the poem. If I'm writing about a Canadian nun the poem may have a hundred little bits of things I've looked at, but she's not remotely anyone I've ever known. And I don't believe anybody would think my nun was quite a real person. She has a heart and she's alive, I hope, and she has a lot of color to her and drama, and has some things that Frost's characters don't, but she doesn't have their wonderful quality of life. His Witch of Coös is absolutely there. I've gathered from talking to him that most of the *North of Boston* poems came from actual people he knew shuffled and put together. But then it's all-important that Frost's plots are so extraordinary, so carefully worked out though it almost seems that they're not there. Like some things in Chekhov, the art is very well hidden.

INTERVIEWER

Don't you think a large part of it is getting the right details, symbolic or not, around which to wind the poem tight and tighter?

LOWELL

Some bit of scenery or something you've felt. Almost the whole problem of writing poetry is to bring it back to what you really feel, and that takes an awful lot of maneuvering. You may feel the doorknob more strongly than some big personal event, and the doorknob will open into something that you can use as your own. A lot of poetry seems to me very good in the tradition but just doesn't move me very much because it doesn't have personal vibrance to it. I probably exaggerate the value of it, but it's precious to me. Some little image, some detail you've noticed—you're writing about a little country shop, just describing it, and your poem ends up with an existentialist account of your experience. But it's the shop that started it off. You didn't know why it meant a lot to you. Often images and often the sense of the beginning and end of a poem are all you have—some journey to be gone through between those things: you

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know that, but you don't know the details. And that's marvellous; then you feel the poem will come out. It's a terrible struggle, because what you really feel hasn't got the form, it's not what you can put down in a poem. And the poem you're equipped to write concerns nothing that you care very much about or have much to say on. Then the great moment comes when there's enough resolution of your technical equipment, your way of constructing things, and what you can make a poem out of, to hit something you really want to say. You may not know you have it to say.

—FREDERICK SEIDEL

(This is the third of a series of interviews on the Art of Poetry. Other poets interviewed are Robert Frost and T. S. Eliot, and future issues will contain interviews with Ezra Pound and W. H. Auden. Our series on the Art of Fiction will continue with C. P. Snow, Kingsley Amis, and Mary McCarthy. Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, Thornton Wilder, Truman Capote, James Jones, and many others have already appeared in the series.)

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THE MARRIAGE OF ANNE

I

It started like this:
A plain of yellow and green,
supporting Conestogas.
A mild dawn wind
chased before the sun.
The first quick-waking rabbits
skittering,
Wakened by hunger
and a familiar cycle.

Smell of grass,
possibly grass,
Smell of water on the air,
and the firm smell of buffalo.
Smell of men and women.
On the dawn wind
The smell of rain.

Children under the wagons waken
and wander down-hill,
Look to the east,
Look for the sun,
Shivering.

In a crowded wagon
a woman opens blue eyes,
stares at a blue pan,
at her new daughter,
at her sleeping husband,
without belief.

A man rubs a greasy hand
in a greasy beard,
squinting from habit,

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Finally stands at the flap of his wagon
Splashing his piss in the greedy ground.

A young boy dreams of Tennessee,
Of swish of gown on under-gown,
Wakens with a heavy hand
And spreads his sleeping wife.

Thunder,
                but no lightning

The first up,
The walkers before breakfast,
Nod as they walk
Crooked against the unsure ground,
Bobbing around the wagons.

A naked girl,
        ten,
swims in the river.
The man who fathered her watches
and cannot understand
        his anxiety.

In the wagon nearest the river
            Robert awakens,
Shiver in his bones.

A girl
            who was sure she'd be first
            awakens last,
Sits in the light of her lamp,
Takes off her shift,
Strokes her breasts downward,
            then upward,
Strokes her belly from the top
            to the bottom,
Slides her palms on her legs

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from the bottom
to the top,
Then stands and nods
At the empty canvas walls
As the sun finally flakes
The first white rocks.

This is the day
of the marriage of Anne.

II

The sun floats across the sky
warming to its task
until it can no longer be thought of as kind.

The noon meal is grand.
Children bolt and dance,
dogs yip,
women cluck.
This is a wedding day!

Rev. Gloucender shaves
for the first time in a week,
Winks at a passing friend
for the first time in six.
Mostly it's been burials.

Anne and her mother prepare,
The mother shy,
The child intent.
Brisk hands adorn
The offering.

Robert tugs at the silken shorts,
fingers the new wool shirt,
Stares in the mirror,
Looking for signs.

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The violin perks up
as Trumlin jiggles,
practicing his piece.
Let us hear it, Trumlin!
and the violin,
like a high donkey,
laughs at them
and they, good hearts,
laugh back.

A pig has been killed for the wedding
And eight big deer line a spit,
beer has been crocked in the wagons
and countless cakes are cooked.

The boy, a groom now,
has a pull of whiskey,
The bride a sip of wine.

At three the games begin.
A fighting match,
champion of the train!
A broken tooth and a clear winner.
A foot race.
A swim, twice across the river.
A shooting exhibition by the guide,
who misses the target each time.

The all day threatening rain
still grumbles
but the earth is still dry
and the dauntless sun
continues by.

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The people move to the center fire,
Nudging and jiggling to have a look.
The bride and groom stand cold apart
Until the reverend takes their hands:

Dear God these your children
are marrying God knows where
in the nation of the Cheyenne
determined to live as man and wife
and deliver unto this sweet earth
the children of their fidelity.
I ask you man to man dear God
to bless this marriage as it stands,
to give them husky children
and a tough old age.

:and he married them.

III

Twist and dance
She married me!
Twist and dance
She married me!
Twist and dance
She married me!
And I'll still have her in the morning.

Fires against the moon.
Dancers against the moon.
Dancers against fires.
Music against dancers.
Legs! Legs! Legs!

I'll still be dancing on my honeymoon,
I'll still be dancing at the end of June.
Give me a kiss and dance me quicker,
I'm getting drunk on this whiskey liquor!

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Robert is drunk,
His eyes are blurry.
Glad he's drunk
And scared he's drunk:
Swing me in a hurry!

Stop for a drink and a rest, boy!

I'll dance all day and I'll dance all night,
I'll dance and wrestle and spit and fight.
I'll dance with her and I'll dance with you,
And I'll up and die at ninety-two.

And I'll still have her in the morning.

IV

Walking toward the place prepared,
Hand in hand in the new-moon darkness,
Relentless as fire against fresh wood.

In the forest the she-owl shivers,
The round worm searches earth.
The river goes its private way,
Blood in the arms of the land.

Hands to each other's heads in comfort,
Lying among the staring trees,
Bodies thick with the earth's soft dust.

Then the rain,
The total rain,
And they go gratefully
to the horseless wagon.

And this is the end
of the day
of the marriage of Anne.

—DANIEL J. LANGTON

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HUGHES RUDD

THE LOWER ROOM

I

That morning the Italian air was filled with distant dust, thin, hanging on horizons and blurring far away outlines as it had all that wartime summer. From the heights the valley floors faded into milky flatness: it was difficult to see accurately beyond the nearest villages. The roads looked like beds of chalk laid open by diggers, white and empty beyond the river.

The highway was not white, but a dirty, asphalt blue. It came down the valley out of the north haze as straight as new wire, halted at the river, then continued on the other bank and disappeared into Cassino in a tight, lefthand curve. When the highway came south out of the town it was changed, familiar, pitted and despised. It dipped and rose, bent itself around the hills and straightened, going south a hundred miles across the plain.

South along the highway, as far from the river as a man could move on the ground in a day, for the highway was broken and twisted and the traffic thick, the mouth of a sunken road touched the highway's shoulder. In this road men traveled below the level of the fields as though in a deep, eroded trench which twisted across the countryside. Overhead the sky was a pale, empty blue, its color weakened by the dust which hung high and formless in the air.

The road was so old that no one could remember its name, nor if it had ever had a name. If anyone asked the people who

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lived near it what it was called they moved their hands quickly but inconclusively, jerking up their hands and spreading the fingers before their chests, opening their mouths several times but saying nothing. Their eyes would widen at the question: they would look at the road and then at the questioner, then back at the road.

"The road!" they would cry. It was the road from the village, and there was no other. "The road! The road!" and they would glare, and shrug, and walk away.

Ten minutes walk from the village the floor of the road rose until the traveler was again in the open, crossing the neat fields toward the first houses, the outpost houses scattered thinly around the base of the rocky hill where the stone buildings of the village jutted up like rocks themselves. Hill and village were a light, streaked gray, their details and outlines blurred by age and weather until each merged with the other in a dead mass. The village lay like a shattered stone, loosely whole, ready to fall apart when struck again by the convict's hammer. Its blank windows looked down on the dry fields and the two monoplanes.

They were small and weak, but their color was a dark, heavy green. They were tethered with ropes to stakes driven into the stubble field, and they rocked and quivered in the hot wind which blew over the plain and might have tumbled away like leaves if the ropes had not held them, for they were only skeletons of aluminum tubing covered with painted linen. A man could lift one by the tail and pull it along behind him.

In heavy, solid contrast with the trembling airplanes, a half-track stood nearby, plated and squat on its flat caterpillar treads. It anchored the ropes along one side of a green pyramidal tent. The tent was smeared with patches of dried mud and had a worn, sagging look, as though its canvas had been allowed to slacken in wind and sun.

Inside, three men sat on army cots, surrounded and encumbered by a jumble of metal rods, engine parts, coils of wire, aluminum tubing and splintered, useless propellers. They collected such things from wrecked airplanes and were especially fond of instrument panels: each man had one, but could not use it, nor had they any use for the rest of their collection. Still, they were unable to throw it away: they carried it with them wherever they went, loading it into the half-

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track with curses and threats against each other. Each man considered his share the most interesting and could not understand the portions of the others, although a visitor from the village could not have told one portion from another.

The slippery heap of a white nylon parachute was piled on the cot of one of the men: he snipped at it with a pair of chromium pinking shears, cutting along the corded seams. Like the others he was dressed in green cotton coveralls with four chevrons on the sleeves. His name was Schultz, and he was the mechanic of the monoplanes.

He was a round-faced man in his late thirties, with a red, rubbery nose and puffy cheeks. A sudden little potbelly sat on his thighs under the coveralls and when he wore trousers he pulled the belt tightly across the belly, trying to disguise it, but only succeeded in making two melons where there had been one. His stomach had a permanent crease in it from this practice and those who saw him naked, his white, damp flesh creased in this way, sometimes pictured the organs inside as squashed and deformed by his vain habit. Schultz was aware of his peculiar looking stomach but no longer worried about it. It was common among men of his age and habits, he believed. He was about fifteen years older than the other two sergeants, the pilots of the monoplanes, and it was they, more than any others, who had to look at his stomach.

He dropped the parachute, which he was cutting into scarves, took a cigarette from his coveralls and lighted it.

"I knew a girl in Berlin, worked in a parachute factory," he said, and he looked at his cigarette with distaste. "She lived across the hall from me in the second house I lived in.

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A Latvian, from Riga. We used to go out together and she'd have to sneak back upstairs with her shoes off."

"Oh, for Christ's sake, Schultz!" cried Moore. He got up from his cot and stood jiggling on first one foot and then the other, his fists clenched and held in front of him in a boxing position.

Schultz smiled and started to speak, but Moore shouted at him.

"I don't care, you know!" he cried. "But the fact is, Schultz, there's a war on, you know! I've heard enough about you and your German friends."

He sat down suddenly, holding his clasped hands tightly between his knees. "I'm the one who has to take it, you know. I'm the one who was always making excuses to the Captain for you, telling him you were flying to group, or checking the rigging or breaking in a new engine. If he knew anything about airplanes—anything at all!—you'd both be in the stockade."

The third sergeant, a young man with sleepy eyes, swung his legs over and sat on the edge of his cot.

"Ho!" he said, squirming happily, jiggling his feet up and down. His name was Miller, and Moore was pretty sure he hated him as much as he hated Schultz. "I'll take that, wouldn't you, Schultz? I'll take the stockade, come on, come on, put the cuffs on me," and he held his hands out toward Moore, his wrists together. "Duncan only thirty miles away—"

Moore glared at him for a moment, then stood.

"Miller, I really believe you're a moron," he said. He turned, stooped and left the tent.

Miller and Schultz sat without speaking until they heard Moore's footsteps fade away. Schultz lighted another cigarette and resumed his preoccupied look, ignoring the swaths of nylon which lay around him like an unfinished bridal gown.

Miller hummed a passage from an unrecognizable song, then fell back on his cot.

"Let's have a drink somewhere," he said.

"Call room service," said Schultz, without changing his expression.

"One of these gooks around here will have something," Miller said, staring sleepily at the tent roof. "You're a college man, you can find it."

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Schultz frowned. "Don't be a jerk," he said.

"The cup that cheers," Miller said. "Past regrets and future fears, hot damn! What gets into him, anyway?"

Schultz flipped cigarette ashes onto the white nylon.

"He tries too hard," he said. "He's from Texas. How the hell do I know what's the matter with him?"

The hot sun fell on the tent and on the fields, and the mountains quivered in the heat. In the distance they heard a machinegun firing in short practice bursts and the harsh voice of a peasant driving oxen came to them from the road.

"I'm ready to go back up," Schultz said, wiping the sweat from his face with his sleeve. "I'm sick to death of this hole."

"Why, certainly," Millet said angrily. "Why not, why not? All you do is sit on your can at the strip, you can't even cook."

"Just the same," said Schultz. "Just the same. They don't even do your laundry around here the way they should. Besides, I'm not a *flieger*, I ain't the type. That's for you, bright boy."

"Ain't?" said Miller, sitting up and staring at the mechanic. "I thought you were gonna help me with my English."

Schultz sighed and pushed the nylon away from him.

"You're corrupting me," he said, lying down on his cot. "You're a stinking influence, Miller."

Remember now, he told himself, lying down and closing his eyes, remember, there is no such thing as a bad boy.

II

When Moore left the tent he walked angrily out into the hot field and started toward the river. Then, remembering the streambed was dry, he stopped. The wish to be someplace other than where he was, to be present where something, anything was happening was strong in his brain and body. His fingers were stiff with impatience and anger and he felt he would strike out at anyone who came near him, a crushing, slamming blow with his fists. A feeling of pleasure swept upward from his stomach as he thought of smashing his knuckles into some still featureless face, kicking savagely at the body as it writhed on the yellow stubble, jumping with both feet on the helpless creature's stomach.

"Unh!" he grunted through clenched teeth, feeling the

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violence of straining muscles and the burning liquid forming in his stomach. "Unh, unh, unh!"

Suddenly conscious of himself, he looked quickly around to see if he was being watched, then walked over to one of the monoplanes and sat down in the shade of its wing.

He was barely into his twenties and he frowned a great deal, as he did now, as though someone had asked him a complex question which he did not quite understand. "What? What did you say?" his expression asked with wrinkled forehead and worried, deepset eyes, saying that this was important and he wanted to understand it, and he would understand it if only everybody would keep quiet for a minute.

"So hot," he said aloud. Unbuttoning his coveralls to the waist, he leaned back against the airplane's balloon tire and stared at the tree line which marked the dry riverbed. Even under the wing the heated air pressed against him like a tank exhaust, and the wing itself seemed to pour out heat from its smooth, painted linen surface. The fabric made small popping sounds as the sun tightened the doped skin of the airplane, stretching it metal-hard over the wooden ribs and braces of the wing's skeleton.

He jerked a piece of stubble out of the dry earth and chewed it, thinking of Miller and Schultz in the tent.

Laughing at me, he thought. But I know they're wrong, it isn't right, that's all. I can't quite get my hands on it, but it isn't right.

Schultz and Miller astonished and enraged him. He had lived a year with them in a tarpaper hut on the dry, barren plains of the fort in Oklahoma as the artillery battalion trained, and he had lived with them on the equally dry and barren land of Africa, on the edge of that continent, as dry and hard as a rind. Now he lived with them in Italy, but only the places had

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changed. Schultz and Miller remained the same. Even the war did not move them, it seemed. Sergeant Moore thought of the war with fear and enormous respect, and felt he owed it something. Miller, whose job was the same as Moore's, paid hardly any attention to it at all, in Moore's opinion. Miller went where the war was and flew above it as he was expected to, but it was perfectly obvious he did not believe those who told him, "That's a war down there." Moore found this annoying but almost understandable, since Miller was a product of institutions: an orphanage, the CCCs, and now the army. But Schultz! Ah, there was no accounting for Schultz, the scoffer, the criminally wise, who often said the allies might well lose the war. He was intolerable, but inescapable: he lived in the same tent, he was always on hand to tie down the airplane when Moore landed, he came back from the villages in the nights and urinated drunkenly on the tentpole, while Miller shouted warnings and threats and Moore lay rigid in the darkness, his jaws locked in anger.

Schultz was at his worst during slack periods such as this, when the war seemed to stall. Sitting under the wing in the heat, Moore wished recklessly that a huge attack would come and set them in motion, since the closer Schultz approached to the war, the quieter he became. For weeks now they had sweated, unmoving, in the little plain below the village.

"He'll do something awful soon," Moore murmured, as though by saying this aloud he could drag the fact out in the open and choke it. He wished again, bitterly, since the wish threatened his own life, that the front would cave in. Before the war, before Schultz, such carelessness would never have occured to him, he knew. In the Texas town where he grew up he had not gone barefooted in the alleys, since he feared broken glass and rusty tin cans, which gave you lockjaw, and in the woods he had never picked up a snake, not even a dead one. When the others flicked at rattlers with sticks, he did so too, but his stick was always longer, and he hung back when the rocks rained on the writhing serpents' heads, and he never picked them up afterward from the creek bank. And now, because of Schultz, he wished himself back in something much worse than the terror of the damp creek bottoms. It was a dreadful notion, and Sergeant Moore sat sweating under the wing, thinking of his room in his parents' house, cool and

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dim on hot afternoons. He had left it willingly, eagerly, but something had gone fearfully wrong, the world had jammed. Moore knew that if something did not give quickly he would explode, like a badly fused shell dropped at the breech. Schultz, the clumsy cannoneer.

And, deliberately, malignantly making it worse, Schultz knew what he was doing. Did Miller?

"Scum!" said Sergeant Moore suddenly and loudly, and he glared over his shoulder at the tent.

And quoting poetry, in his Illinois twang! Sergeant Moore groaned under the airplane wing, thinking of Miller's delight in rhymes. In the little tin ammunition box which Miller kept under his cot was a pocket edition of The Oxford Book of English Verse and every night in the tent he read it by the glow of his flashlight, usually aloud, in spite of Moore's protests. His favorite was "The Ballad of Bouillabaisse" (which he pronounced "bullabase"), and he would repeat it and repeat it until Moore left the tent to stumble around in the dark outside, staying out to listen to the guns rumbling on the horizon until Miller's voice died away and the flashlight was out in the tent. There were ways to behave, Moore thought, and in a war that was not one of them.

III

In the tent Schultz was so bored he lay absolutely still, refusing to move even his eyelids as Miller rustled in his tin ammunition box, looking for something in the mess of old fruit drops, dirty writing paper, paperbound books and other things he kept there. His fumbling sounded like a puppy wrestling with old newspapers, Schultz decided.

"What we need is a dog," he said to the tent roof, without opening his eyes. "Something to keep us amused."

"No, I want a fiddle," Miller said. "I'll bet you somewhere in this damn country there's a whole warehouse full, if I could just find it."

"Mmm," said Schultz.

It was true, Miller searched diligently for a violin in every farmhouse and every village, interrogating the civilians with his "Fiddle? Violino?" and a violent pantomime of violin playing. Schultz did not know whether these civilians thought Miller really insane or just found it odd that a sergeant should

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want a violin, but they always looked startled and they never had a fiddle, nor even a guitar, which was Miller's second choice. Even if they had one they certainly wouldn't turn it over to him, thought Schultz, it's the silliest thing I ever heard of. This quest of Miller's, which had been going on for so long now, had no real purpose, since he could not play either instrument, and it irritated Schultz by its pointlessness. In the beginning he had questioned Miller carefully about his motives in the fiddle hunt, but the other was unable to explain it clearly. Miller had a scene in mind, a setting complete to the last detail, in which the fiddle was a necessary property. He saw himself sitting at night on a pile of crumbled stone and brick in a ruined, deserted village, playing the violin while rain came down in streams and torrents. The hoped-for-scene had become a part of the life around the three sergeants until they thought of it without surprise. Schultz could not approve, but he was resigned.

"Maybe when we get farther north," he said now, as he always did when Miller spoke of his wish. "They make the things up there somewhere."

It would be something to see, all right, he thought. Sleepyeye Miller, who looked just a little like a clown in the early stages of making-up, huddled out in the rain squawking away on his fiddle. It would drive Moore really nuts. It would probably upset the whole damned war; in fact, Schultz thought happily, after all, they can't have things like that going on. It's the little things like that make the whole business bearable, especially when we're sitting around back here with nothing to look forward to but some officer coming down to check up on us. Why don't they keep those squirts busy swabbing out gun barrels or giving short arms or running around the country reading maps. They think an airplane is a truck, they want you to grease it all the time. It bothers the hell out of those people that the damn things will keep flying even if you don't strip them down completely every thirty days and check the tires every thirty minutes. The artillery! he thought with disgust, and sat up on his cot. So many better days to remember, and now this stupid politics! They win, we win, who cares? it's the same old dirty mess either way and a hell of a waste of time. After all, I'm thirty-eight years old as it is, he thought, and these jingo boys will

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push me around over here forever, piddling, doing nothing worth a damn, all of us just loafing in a barnyard full of manure and stink.

Schultz squeezed his lips together and puffed out his cheeks, then released his breath with a popping noise.

"I'm a Yankee Doodle Dandeeee," he sang aloud to the roof of the tent. "Yankee Doodle do or Dieeeeee."

He sat up, puffing and grunting, swung his feet to the ground and sat a moment, bent forward, staring vacantly, his forearms resting on his thighs and his puffy hands hanging between his knees.

"After the attack," he said calmly and surely, the voice of the narrator in a documentary motion picture. He bugged his eyes out and let his mouth fall open. "Ugh," he said. "Jeeze, Doc, will yah write a letter fer me? Why, certainly, son, boy, soldier, old man. Nurse! V-mail, pen, clipboard, right! Go ahead, son. Well, Doc, jus' tell my ole lady, the address is Saint James Infirmary, Route One, just tell the loveable ole bucket of guts..." his voice grew weaker, fading, his eyelids fluttered and almost closed, but the clipped and friendly voice of the doctor came back: "Yes? Yes? Nurse, hurry!" and then the stupid voice again, "Jus' tell 'er we held, Doc. Ahhhh!" and Schultz pretended to die, falling back on the cot.

"Balls," he said. "Balls, balls, balls. All the pawnbrokers' balls of Italee cannot sweeten this little harm. Sweetbreads for the general discontent. Just mountain oysters without a pearl in a carload. Pigs in pokes, looking for a home. *Vive le contrat social, fella.*"

He got up, stepped briskly to Miller's cot, and shook hands with him.

"My name's Mock Clock," said Schultz. "Pardon me while I empty my bowels."

Again he walked briskly, purposeful and erect, to the tent opening where he halted, advancing one foot, leaning slightly backward, his thumbs hooked in the cloth belt of his fatigues, glaring scornfully out into the empty fields, his belly thrust forward.

"I am the creator and the destroyer," he said serenely. "All this means nothing to me, Caesar. Yes," he said, relaxing the pose, "I have my works. You know, I think maybe Moore has finally flipped his id, as we frolic here in the foothills and the

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tall ships grate upon the shingle, lifting with the tide, oh, the tide-o."

He cleared his throat and sang it softly:

"Oh, the tide-o, the tide-oooo," the notes dying softly and sadly in the quiet of the tent.

"All work and no jack makes dull a playboy," Schultz said, picking up his cloth fatigue cap from a disordered, leaning barracks bag. He tugged the cap crookedly onto his head and left the tent.

"It's just a matter of breeding, boy!" he called back to Miller. "Breeding and rank."

He walked toward a small structure like a battered upright coffin which stood fifty yards from the tent, walking at the brisk, fraudulent pace, head erect, shoulders back, the bill of the cloth cap bent and ragged over his squinted eyes. The fatigues clung to his middle as tightly as the casing on a sausage, but the cloth billowed around his knees and fell in loose folds over his buttocks, baggy, wrinkled and stained. He did not look back at the tent, the half-track and the monoplanes.

Within ten yards the efficient, purposeful walk disappeared: Schultz began his usual amble, his shoulders slumped, walking on his heels, his feet pointed outward at every step. He kept his head erect, frowning and puckering his lips as though in disapproval, the stern overseer grown fat and almost drunken in a solitude the overseer had made for himself out of scorn and fear and boredom. When he reached the little structure he undid his fatigues, dropped them around his ankles, lowered his underwear and sat down.

This little building, formed of dented sheets of aluminum and scraps of green canvas, wired and twisted around metal tubing, was open on the side which faced the mountains and the village, and Schultz had an unobstructed view of this scene, as well as of the occasional peasant who walked across the fields carrying bundles of some sort of grain. As he sat there he exchanged pleasant gestures with the farm workers and called a greeting to those who passed within earshot.

The nicest spot in the whole country, thought Schultz, meaning the little building, which he called the Toonerville Trolley in spite of the messily lettered words, Short Arms Hotel, daubed on the canvas wall. There's no doubt about it,

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the Trolley makes all the difference. We're really living, kid, just like human beings, when you cart around a thing like this. We never had it so good, General, thanks very much, and thank you, Colonel, and thank you too, Quentin Reynolds, you've all been swell, really, we get along just fine.

If we could just armor this thing, Schultz thought, lighting a cigarette. A secret weapon! We'd be on Unter den Linden before we could shake the shitty end of a stick, which is what they'd give us to shake, and to hell with the psychological warfare branch. You wanta scare 'em, *scare* 'em, for God's sake, don't futz around with those silly pamphlets. On second thought, send us the pamphlets, we can do a little offset with them right here, and before that I could read them to Moore, he'd enjoy them very much. In fact, you're writing those for Moore, although you're going at it all wrong, of course, unless you figure all those birds over there are Moores, too, and it is an idea, Colonel, I've got to hand it to you there, all right. You should have Moore in a glass case at the Pentagon, pickled in rumors or in somebody's blood, preferably his own, you could use him as the national yardstick and throw away the platinum one, or whatever it's made out of. He probably expands and contracts quite a bit more than the old model, but you could run a graph on that, figure it all out like a new bridge, one you aren't quite certain about. Either that or give him a load test, see how much he can stand. That's the most practical approach, in fact it's so practical I'd say it was almost a field expedient. Somebody will get a promotion out of this, General, mark my words! Yessir, heads will roll somewhere...

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And while we're at it, I've got another stunning idea, one for the national war monuments crowd. Yessir, this little old Trolley, right here, have this made up in marble and bronze and put it in the middle of Arlington. You may not realize it, honored sirs, but this is the real meat of the matter right here. Absolutely! I realize you've had to concern yourselves with the big picture and aren't too familiar with field matters, but I've been fortunate enough to relax with our boys, and this is it, right here. If you asked those boys, General, do you know what they'd tell you? Why, to a man, they'd say, shit, General, and no ifs, ands or buts about it. They're wonderful boys, General, and their hearts are pure. Oh, they're shy about it! They don't let just anybody see what's in their hearts, General, you know that, they're just diamonds in the rough, those boys. You might think they're the most stupid, illiterate, bubble-headed bunch of jerks you ever saw, that half of them think they're in the Pacific and the other half thinks this is Louisiana maneuvers, but they're *boys*, General! Boys with false teeth and three wives and a dose of clap, General, that's all, and they're all going back and learn to read when this is over, probably by next Christmas, so they can find out what a dashing crew they were. It's not going to be easy, reading under a flat rock in West Virginia, but these boys can do anything. Look at what they've done already, stormed Fortress Europe, old Festung Europa, and didn't murder over half of themselves doing it. God knows what they did to the hun, General! It makes you feel proud, it gives you that old tingle jingle dingle, doesn't it. Citizen soldiers, screwing up the world fair...

"Good morning, son bitch."

Schultz started and looked up. An old man in a dirty black suit stood before him, not three feet away, smiling and nodding pleasantly.

"What the hell...," said the mechanic.

"Please," the old man said, and he seized Schultz's right hand and shook it vigorously. "Welcome, welcome!"

"Let go of me!" shouted Schultz, and he jerked his hand away. "Don't you see what I'm doing? If you aren't the craziest damn people I ever saw..."

"Please," the visitor said again. "You make peepee? Very nice," and he smiled and bobbed his head at Schultz.

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"God damn it," cried the mechanic, but he began to laugh and could not go on.

"Very nice," repeated the Italian, apparently reassured by Schultz's laughter.

"Whoooo," choked Schultz, leaning back weakly against the tin wall of the Trolley. "Varree nize."

"Hell, yes," the old man said, happy to find his American in such a jolly mood. "Me, New York, *millenovecento*," and he carefully wrote "1900" in the air with his finger. "*Buono*, New York."

"Yes," gasped the mechanic, "varree nize," and he burst out with more laughter. If only this were Times Square, he thought, or the Astor bar, and he watched the old man unwrap a cloth bundle he was carrying and remove a full wine bottle.

"Drink," said the Italian, offering the red wine to Schultz with his right hand and patting himself on his stomach with his left. "Good, very nice."

"Wait a minute," said Schultz, and after a moment he stood and stepped out of the Trolley. "Come on," he said, taking the old man's arm and leading him toward the tent.

At the entrance he pushed the Italian ahead of him through the opening and pointed to Moore's cot, where the old man seated himself.

"What's going on?" asked Miller. He was seated on his cot with his bare feet drawn up on the edge and was dabbing a purple liquid between his toes with a ball of cotton.

"You just can't beat these people," Schultz said, and he fell on his cot and began laughing again.

"Drink," the old peasant said to Miller, holding out the bottle.

"Well!" cried the pilot, and he quickly thrust his feet into his shoes, rummaged in his tin box and brought out an aluminum canteen cup. "The cup that cheers!" and he filled the cup with wine, then returned the bottle.

The visitor sat rigidly on the edge of Moore's cot, his hands on his knees. His face, wrinkled like the meat of a walnut, was set in a rather foolish but pleasant look and he smiled very hard, showing the gaps in his rotten teeth. A strong smell of garlic, sweat and cheese came from him.

"Very nice," said Schultz, looking at the old man. "Very

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formal," and he reached for the bottle, produced his cup from under his cot and emptied the bottle into it.

"Where'd you pick up this character?" Miller asked, staring pleasantly at the civilian.

"In the Trolley," Schultz said. "He damned near got in the can with me. We'd have made a pretty little scene out there, in spite of all you hear about clean old men."

"Not very clean," said Miller, still looking at the Italian.

"No," said Schultz, "but he used to live in New York. He thinks New York is very nice," and he started laughing.

"Yes, very nice," said the old man, looking at Miller.

"You speak English?" Miller's sleepy eyes widened. "You know anybody around here has a fiddle?" He stood up and hopped around in front of the Italian, jiggling up and down.

"Please?" said the civilian, and his happy expression slackened.

"A fiddle!" said Miller. "A violino!" and he held his left arm out, fingers curled in toward the palm, and made wild sawing motions with his right hand over the elegantly crooked left elbow joint.

"Ah!" cried the old man, and he too made the movements with his skinny old arms. "No, I am not a violinist," he said in Italian, and looked sadly and warily at Miller.

"Hell!" said the pilot, hearing the "no" sound, and he sat down on his cot and drank from his canteen cup.

"Hope deferred," Schultz said. "Vino?" and he held out his empty cup to the old man.

"No vino," said the Italian, and he held up the empty wine bottle. "My house, plenty vino, plenty everything," he said, and then he put his fists to his temples with the forefingers extended stiffly upward and made butting motions with his head. Schultz and Miller looked at him, surprised. He then held his fists about two feet above the ground and made jerking motions toward the floor of the tent.

"A cow!" said Miller, delighted. "He wants us to come and eat a cow!" and he pulled off his shoes and began putting on his socks.

"Well, I'll be damned," Schultz said.

"Hell, yes," said the old man happily. "Good, hah? Good, Italia, no?"

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"You betcha," said Schultz and he and Miller stood, ready, but the old man shook his head.

"*Doppo*," he said, moving his hands up in a curve and then down. "*Doppo mezzogiorno*," and he repeated the curving motion.

"This afternoon," Schultz said, smiling at the old man. "He wants us to come over to his house and eat a cow this afternoon. How about that!" and he nodded rapidly at the Italian, smiling and shaking hands with him. "*Buono*," very nice," he said. "*Sehr gut.*"

The old peasant stood up, still shaking hands with the mechanic, pulled him out of the tent and pointed toward the trees along the dry river. Beyond the streambed Schultz saw the roof of a building showing through the trees, and he nodded again at the old man.

"You bet," he said. "*Casa*. We come."

"*Doppo*," the Italian said again, and he looked up at Schultz to make sure he understood.

"Absolutely," said Schultz, getting a little bored. "We'll be there," and he shook hands with the old man and went back into the tent. For a moment the visitor stood where Schultz had left him, his trouser legs and awkward, lumpy shoes visible from inside the tent, then he walked away.

"It's a barbecue or some damn thing," Schultz said to Miller, who had removed polish, brush and cloth from his tin box and was shining his shoes. "Anything for the *Americani*, you betcha. They must never have seen any before over at his place, the doughfeet must have gone through here in a hurry. Well, we'll fix that," and he stretched out on his cot to wait for the afternoon.

IV

Sitting on the ground with the airplane's tire at his back, Moore was having his nightmare, staring at nothing.

...Help push plane out of wheelpits, walk around, shake wires, squat to look under control surfaces, grab wingtips, rock her on the fat tires. Satisfied, climb in, shrug into 'chute harness, fasten belt, Schultz swings prop, engine catches, rattling. Always rattles, nothing wrong there. After a minute reach overhead, twist switch from ON to R, then to L, back to ON, watching tachometer, from 1500 drops to 1200, okay.

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Wave to Schultz and Miller, I'll bet they go to the village, open throttle and taxi down to the end of the field, turn around, left brake is soft but not too soft, open throttle wide, release brakes, airplane starts to roll, getting speed, getting lift, grass is bumpy, then one last bump, starts to settle, doesn't, off and airborne...

He started a shallow, climbing turn to the northwest, looking back once at the field and the tent, growing smaller behind the rudder and the elevators. As the engine rattled, roared steadily in the climb he unfastened the safety belt and reached back, grunting, to the radio in the rear of his seat. He switched it on, fastened the belt again and took a set of headphones from a hook on the windowframe and clamped them over his thigh. A hand microphone hung from another hook, swinging and jiggling in the engine vibration.

He sat with his left hand on the red throttle knob, his right on the black rubber handle of the control stick, craning his head around to the left, now to the right, tipping his wing up to see under it, gazing up, down and on all sides of the monoplane. His eyes passed across the instrument panel as his head swung from left to right and he read the information there without pausing.

When he crossed the shoulder of the first mountain the altimeter read 1,000 feet. He continued to climb as he flew up the valley, over service battery's village, the big mountain looming ahead of him through the propeller blur. It reared out of the haze in the valley, so much higher than its neighbors. He flew straight toward the mountain until it was about a thousand yards away, then turned and throttled back, flying slowly back and forth across the width of the valley.

The white buildings of the town were scattered at the mountain's base, where nothing moved. The buildings blazed in the sun, empty and white as chalk.

He pulled the earphones from his thigh and clamped them on his head, hearing again the buzzing static as they settled over his ears. He depressed a button on the microphone's handle and spoke against the harsh popping of the engine.

"Baker one able this is baker three able," he chanted, and released the button, waiting.

The buzzing in his ears accelerated, crackling, and changed into drawling, southern speech, metallic.

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"Baker three able this is baker one able are you ready to observe," said the voice.

He pressed the button and answered, his voice faintly audible to him through the earphones, the crackling and the engine.

"One able give me coordinates," he said, and almost at once the voice crackled back to him.

"Three able daisy may from approximate coordinates," and a pause, "wuh-yun, ny-yun, forah, point, six-uh, tha-ree, seh-vun," saying it very carefully, and then, quickly and matter of fact, "can you observe, over."

He fumbled with a bulky map which he pulled from behind a control cable on the floor, unfolding it with one hand until he found the target on the map.

"One able one round smoke when ready," he said into the microphone, and the voice came back, "roger wait."

He looked up the valley, across the river, to a clump of trees along a small stream. He could not see the stream, but the map had a thin, blue thread printed on it, so the stream was there as far as he was concerned. He flew back and forth, glancing at the distant trees, waiting for the guns to receive the firing data, waiting for the smoke shell's white phosphorous plume in the valley.

North of the river, down the miles of valley, in the white dust roads, the blue asphalt highway, the hard line of the railway track, in the streets of the villages, he looked down on a deserted world, emptied of men and animals, where nothing moved, nothing showed itself. In the air he was a part of that emptiness and loneliness, he moved slowly along by himself. Although he felt the bareness of the sky he continued to look around him, not trusting the feeling, looking for something above him, under him, behind the elevators, sliding up at him from the left as he looked to the right. He seemed anxious, as though he had been waiting a long time, and was becoming impatient. His head checked in its swing and he stared at a patch of sky, frowning, his body taut against the safety belt and parachute straps. Then he looked away and continued his searching. Sometimes he reached out to touch the plastic windshield with a gloved finger, rubbing at a real or imagined grease spot. In the still air he fussed with the stabilizer control, rolling it a fraction of an inch forward or

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backward, balancing the airplane in its element as one may balance on a log half-submerged in water. He eased the throttle handle back, listening to the almost unnoticeable easing of the engine's labor, pushing it forward when the machine attempted to lose altitude, until he had combined engine and stabilizer in a delicate balance, the airplane flying slowly, its nose above the horizon, not climbing. And then something flashed in the trees along the invisible stream and he swung the airplane around with the rudder, reaching for the microphone before he heard the voice crackling in the earphones.

"Three able smoke on the way!" cried the voice, elated now, and he stared at the small, far away trees, ignoring every other part of sky and earth, waiting until a huge boll of new cotton appeared magically in the valley, short of the trees, opened, grew into a thick white column and started to drift away, the smoke thinning until it was bluish, like milk.

"One able two hundred short," he said, and in less than a minute the second smoke shell burst beyond the trees, not more than fifty yards over.

"Repeat range six rounds h.e. adjusting gun only," he said, and soon there they were, the high explosive shells bursting among the trees, so he repeated the order twice. A cloud of brown dust hung in the trees, plummeting up abruptly as more shells exploded, and then an orange flame leaped up from the dust and glared for a moment before it flickered down to a small, guttering light. Heavy, greasy smoke began to roll up, boiling among the trees, lighted at intervals from within by orange and red fire.

"One able," he said, "cease firing, mission accomplished. A fire in the target area, looks like ammo."

"Roger, thank you and out," the voice said, sounding very close to him in the earphones, and he swung away and started home.

The first black burst was on his left and low. As he dived toward it he heard the crack of the explosion, too loud. He sat forward, straining against the belt, the throttle jammed open, swishing the plane from side to side with the rudder, urging the ground to come up to him.

Two more black smudges appeared in front of him suddenly, illogically, like wadded balls of black chiffon. He rushed

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toward them, saw them whip past the windshield, hearing the quick blam blam of the bursts, then pulled back on the stick, levelling out a hundred feet above over the highway.

It wasn't praying, he was too busy for that, but a frenzied series of calculations zipped through his mind, weighing this maneuver against that, thinking ahead to the hills which he must climb over, trying to keep his speed above normal with a slight, very slight dive and yet not lose all altitude, and mixed in with it a wild hope, a wish to be missed by the black burst, to have the gunners lose sight of him in the broad valley, to have them drop a shell at the breech, jam the mechanism, miscalculate... and finally he came to the low hills and lifted the airplane over them with a strong pull on the control stick, dropping down beyond them with enough speed to stay in the air, no more. Another shallow dive and the monoplane lost its sluggishness and he was rattling along over the highway again, over service battery's village, over the mountain shoulder and home, curving down in a diving turn to the field, where the Cub ran along with a rumbling sound, then turned with a blast of engine noise and taxied toward the tent. Head out the open door, squinting in the prop blast, let her settle easy into the pits... engine off and sit for a moment in the silence before climbing out, stiff.

Telling Schultz, "That was one hour and thirty-five minutes," looking at the watch, "you log it and I'll write in the mission."

V

Moore was breathing heavily, as though he had run a long way and had fallen under the airplane wing to rest. His eyes were shiny and wet and in his partly open mouth his tongue was swollen and dry. He had drawn his legs up against his stomach and was gripping his knees with his hands.

He relaxed as he became aware of himself, feeling like a man who watches a motion picture nervously, forgetting the excitement is on film, restricted to the screen and not able to reach him. He pulled a tattered cigarette package from his pocket and lighted a cigarette, twisting his lips because the brand was one of the unfamiliar ones which he despised. The sight of one of these strange tobacco packages always gave him a faint feeling of alarm, it made him think of easy graft

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somewhere, of rich, fat men laughing at him as they hoarded millions of good cigarettes.

This is going to be a terrible day, he thought, and threw the cigarette away, watching it smoulder in the field, under the hot sun. And then he heard something, and looked up as Schultz and the old man came out of the tent.

Oh, what's he up to now, he wondered, and the anxieties of the ground, the distrust and doubt came rushing back into him as though he had not relived the hour and thirty-five minutes in the valley. He wanted to stay under the wing forever, out of it, finished with it, but then he sighed, and groaned, and stood up. After hesitating, he went over to the tent and ducked inside.

Miller looked up, then continued to work on his shoes with the brush. Schultz was lying on his cot: he pursed his lips and grunted, without opening his eyes.

Moore looked at them quickly, trying to guess what had happened.

"What did that old man want?" he said. "You drinking now, in the middle of the morning? What if the captain comes down here, you know when we're out on a rest like this he's liable to start poking around—"

"We're resting!" Schultz said. "We're not drunk, we're just resting. In a minute we'll probably be writing V mails, begging for fruit cakes, for Christ's sake. If the captain comes down here he can censor the damn things, unless you'd like to do it yourself."

"Well, it'll be your problem, not mine," Moore said.

"That's right," Schultz said, not opening his eyes. "That's exactly right. I'm glad you understand it," and he broke wind noisily.

Moore wrinkled his nose in disgust and turned to Miller.

"Did you watch him? I mean, he didn't take anything, did he? That's all they're after, you know, they'll steal anything..."

"He invited us to a barbecue," Miller said, admiring the sheen on his shoes.

"What? What are you talking about?" Moore noticed Miller's shoes for the first time. "What are you doing that for? You know we're not supposed to leave the area, they might want us to fly somebody over to corps."

Schultz gritted his teeth. Leave the area! What the hell is that,

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anyway. You can't leave this area without a boat or a B 17, unless you're dead, and even then it's a relative thing.

"It's just across the river," he told Moore. "The old man has a cow he wants us to help him eat, he's trying to be varree nize. He used to live in New York."

"New York!" cried Moore. "They all say that. They all tell you they lived in Brooklyn, they think that makes everything all right. The fact of the matter is they lost their war, that's all. If it weren't for that they'd be shooting at us right now," and he threw himself on his cot, face down. "I don't think we should leave the planes," he said.

Schultz made a face which meant, nobody invited *you*, you know, but he said nothing. Miller had finished polishing his shoes and, after admiring them once more, placed them carefully under his cot and began rummaging in a canvas bag.

"They don't have barbecues over here anyway," Moore said.

"They got a cow and vino, the old man said," and Miller's expression showed he felt that was enough, or almost enough. The rest he would take care of by himself.

"It's just a party of some kind," Schultz said. "The old man's just trying to be nice to us, that's all."

"What for?" asked Moore, turning to the mechanic. "Did you think of that? These people don't like us, they never have. They probably want to get us away from here so they can come over and steal everything we have."

"Let 'em have it," said Schultz. "The army will give us some more. They've got plenty of everything, even pilots. They're plowing 'em under, I hear, back in Oklahoma."

It's not as if I wanted them to do anything for me, thought Moore. He watched Schultz, the closed eyes, the twitching, puffy cheeks, the half-smothered snorts. Schultz thrashed grumpily on his cot and then rolled over, his face to the wall of the tent.

Moore looked away and sighed. Miller pulled a clean cotton shirt from his blue barracks bag and spread it out on his cot, smoothing it with his hands, trying to flatten the wrinkles, and the sight made Moore quietly furious, since it smacked of a three-day pass. Actually, Moore told himself, we might go back up to the line at any minute. Any minute they might come down here and tell us we're going back up

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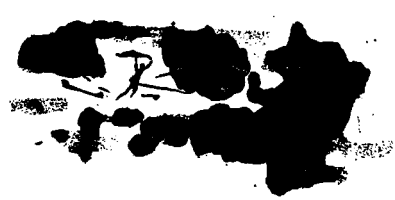
there. Why can't Miller and Schultz think of that? Why can't they ever understand what a serious business this is? Why don't they ever see the war the way I do? One afternoon back in the winter he had been patrolling above the Monastery when the Arkansas voice crackled in his earphones with warning: German fighters were reported coming down the valley from the north. Moore dived away from the monastery, across the valley and into a bowl-shaped pocket in the mountains, a huge cleft in the rocks a quarter of a mile wide which plunged clear to the valley, almost 3,000 feet below. He circled in this cleft in a tight turn, hiding in it until they would tell him over the radio that the valley was clear, that he could come back and finish adjusting the guns on a town, and after he had made four of these turns (which were tricky to make in the cleft because air rushed down from the mountain into it like water into a sluice, and was turbulent), he noticed something foreign in the snow and rocks, something waving to him.

He looked as he came around again and saw a soldier on a ledge perhaps fifty feet wide, up to his crotch in snow, holding one end of a pup tent. The other end of the little tent stood out from him in the wind, snapping and flapping like a flag or a line of washing, the canvas viciously alive in the man's hands, as though it would tear itself from him at any moment.

He went around again, staring at the soldier, who stood without moving except for his arms, which were being jerked and shaken by the tent. He looked as though he might stand that way until the wind quit, since it was obviously impossible for him to handle the tent alone. Had the tent almost blown away from its moorings, or was he just now trying to set it up? Where were his friends, and how did he expect to peg it down in the snow and rock?

As Moore circled he realized the man was looking at him.



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At times they were within seventy-five or a hundred feet of each other or even closer as the bucking air currents tore at the tent and at the airplane controls, and Moore stared back into the soldier's face, neither man making a sign of recognition or of friendship. The man on the ledge appeared numbed, resigned to this fantastic job of holding on to the tent all alone on a mountainside, he seemed beyond help, almost scornful of it, even if help could come to him. He looked at Moore in the airplane as if this was perfectly ordinary, as if he was not in the least surprised or angered by the tent nor by Moore's circling, so close he could have hit the airplane with a stone but so far from him that it would have taken him twenty-four hours of climbing, scrambling, falling and walking to arrive at Moore's tent, which was ten minutes away in the monoplane.

And so Moore went around and around, looking at the soldier, the soldier looking at him, dumbly, each unable to communicate with the other, the man on the ledge even unwilling to do so, apparently, standing there in the snow as though Moore and the airplane were parts of a nightmare which would go away eventually, keeping his eye on the nightmare but certainly not about to greet it, and before he could stop himself Moore began laughing.

He circled again and again, laughing at the man on the ledge in his ridiculous, pathetic predicament, turning his head away from the ledge when he came near it so the soldier could not see that he was laughing or feel that he was laughing, and then the clear signal had come on the radio and he had turned back into the valley, not knowing if the man had known he was laughing nor whether or not he had held on to the tent, his home.

I hope he didn't see me laugh, thought Moore.

This doesn't seem so bad, when you think of things like that, he told himself, and he balanced the man on the ledge, all the men in the mountains against Schultz and Miller, but then he thought of the old man and the cow, and it was no balance at all, they would go across the river and he would go with them, so all the rest was wasted.

"When are you going," he said, his voice running downhill, not like a question. He spoke to Miller, but Schultz rolled over and looked at him.

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"This afternoon, sometime," he said. "Want to come?"

Moore shrugged, why not, and turned on his side with his back to Schultz. They might even go all the way to Naples, he thought, if I weren't along, and he tried to relax and sleep. He no longer slept at night for more than fifteen or twenty minutes at a time and he wanted to sleep now, for the afternoon across the river.

VI

I hope they don't boil the damn thing, thought Schultz. Of course it's bound to be as old as Mussolini, maybe it'll be too tough to do anything else. Maybe they'll fry it, though, that wouldn't be as bad as boiling it, or maybe they'll roast it, on an iron spit. That's all right, if you know what you're doing. Just so they don't boil it. He began to think of food, of how it could be, although he knew it wouldn't be like that at all.

Lying on his cot he imagined the farmhouse kitchen bins full of firm, clean potatoes, and crowded strings of onions, garlic, peppers and mushrooms hanging from the ceiling over the deep, gaping fireplace, and in the cellar there were great, fragrant casks of good, nutty wine, both red and white. Hard crusted, freshly baked loaves of long, hot bread lay on a scrubbed table in a still life of fat, scarlet radishes, fresh from the moist earth which still clung to their roots in tiny clots of mud. There were big, sweet onions in piles, bunches of crisp celery, chicory and heads of tender leaf lettuce, all strewn over the raw white wood of the table in an abundance which was beautiful. And meat he wanted in the farmhouse, all sorts of meat, from whole sides of fat beef, slabs of pork, bacon and heavy curves of chops to freshly killed chickens and rabbits, stuffed with garlic and vegetables, ready for the ovens. The farm woman would smile, delighted to have him at the table, giving him little glances of appreciation and admiration (not bad looking, either!), as her husband sat with him, filling his glass and slapping him on the back in a burst of affection and good feeling. Platters and bowls of steaming, delicious, mouth watering food would come to the table, some of it entirely unknown to him. Meats in tangy, thick brown sauces, fried chops, broiled steaks, juicy roasts, bowls of fried chicken and fried potatoes, roast chickens and rabbits, wooden bowls of salads, each green leaf coated with

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oil and vinegar, and a heavy, lopsided glass filled with the splendid wine. After eating he would light a good cigarette from a fresh, rich smelling pack, and drink cups of strong black coffee with small glasses of fiery, satisfying grappa. Then he would be shown into a white-walled bedroom, the plaster unblemished and spotless, the bed covered with a lace spread. He would slip down between the cool, starched sheets and sleep, sleep, sleep, for days on end, for there would be no bedbugs in the bed. When he wakened he would take a scalding bath, then dress in clean clothing and go in to breakfast. It would be time to start on the wife then, too.

Maybe, thought Schultz, maybe I might take the bath first, then have the food, but he knew it wouldn't be that way. He hated to think of lying on those clean sheets with his dirty body, but the bath would have to wait.

What a lot of crap! he told himself, and moved impatiently on the cot, feeling the sweat trickling across his stomach. We'll go over there and drink that acid and catch fleas from somebody and then we'll come back and puke all night and in the morning Moore will look like somebody's mother, seen through a bloody caul. Just The Boys, The Boys From Gladland, out on an innocent frolic, the nation's ambassadors as busy as a bucket of snakes.

And now Moore's in it, too, thought Schultz, the white hope is going to drop his sword for a minute and go look out the castle window. No good can come of that, no good at all, he won't like it and he'll tell us how much he doesn't like it and he's liable to ruin it for everybody trying to find a Hidden Meaning in all that rut and bellywash. They should weld him into the airplane and never let him out, feed him through a hose. In there he can't bother anybody, short of killing them. He probably does that very well, I don't know. How many of them are like that, do you suppose? More on the other side, probably, but enough here, too. The Believers. They learned to listen and to read about the time Lindbergh flew to Paris and it's been going on ever since then on both sides and it really is remarkable, it's so screwy it's fascinating. Somehow or other they see and hear exactly what they're supposed to and nothing else, as though the world was giving it to them through electrodes built into their skulls. They want everything already canned and labeled, like a supermarket, you

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can take your pick, although the choice is limited by management, of course. A stabilized economy without any economists. How did they do it, anyway, or did it just happen, like Babe Ruth and the synthetic barroom Irishmen and the Ku Klux Klan...

No, Moore did it to himself, decided Schultz, I guess they all do, it's something in the air, they don't know any better and they wind up liking it. What I should do, he told himself, feeling a faint stir of interest at the idea, what I really should do is undertake the de-education of Moore, I should straighten him out about things. He's just a kid, after all, there's still some hope, if I could just get him to listen to me and really bear down on him... wouldn't his parents be surprised! Send us the boy, we send you the jerk, the no-man, he doesn't give a damn how much you holler, you can take the legion and the pta and the optimists club and shove 'em up your ass, he just wants to be left alone. It's an idea, anyway, it might keep us amused.

If we left Moore behind this afternoon maybe they'd steal away with him, he thought, up into the hills like the banditti used to do. He could get everything on a good, sound basis up there, hang somebody and raise the price of cheese, be a real, saddlesore military government man. The trouble with you is, Moore, you enlisted, or rather, there's something wrong with you, so you enlisted. You enlisted and you're from the South, where the boll weevils and the corn pone and the fried crap and the volunteers come from. You think you're an aristocrat, but there aren't any aristocrats. That whole country down there is one big privy, with everybody scribbling dirty words on the walls and pretending they didn't, you silly son of a bitch, just a tribe of tumblebugs, and then they all run out and enlist. Practically every volunteer in the army comes from down there, what're they after? You'd think they had some kind of wobblejawed, barefoot, illiterate tradition about it, a bareassed, inbred Junker crowd, only in this one everybody's a buckbottom private. Generations of pfc's, for Christ's sake, and occasionally a genius rises among them and makes sergeant, after he learns to smoke instead of dip and figures out what his army handkerchief is for. Why do they do it? Is this so much better than chopping cotton or squatting around the square? They must still be trying to prove some-

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thing, if it's not just getting away from something, they must still be trying to show somebody, maybe themselves, that what happened in the 1860's was just carelessness, or maybe they think it's still the same war, and what the hell, I guess it is. But no, decided Schultz, most of them never heard of that war or this one either, they think it's a big shivaree, I gonnies, an organized ride out in the country, they figure they're all going to hide up in the woods and shoot twenty-twos at the church bell while the revival is going on, just to devil the congregation. The only thing wrong is there isn't enough whiskey and the congregation shoots back, to beat hell. Then it's too late and they don't like it, just like they didn't like it in the sixties when the coon hunt got caught out in a tornado and the coon got away and there was nothing to do but go home and cuss at the coon. You can't cuss at a tornado very long or very well, it's a freak of nature, it could happen to anybody, but that goldurned coon, that impudent scannel! They've been looking for that coon to come sneaking back ever since, and every once in a while somebody on the other side of the ridge let's out a yell, "Ah seen him, ah seen the son of a bitch!" and whoopee! whambam, drop the turnip greens and fatback and bust out the door, light runnin', man! and down the holler and out of sight in a cloud of dried cowshit. That's why the army gives 'em anti-tetanus shots right away, before they even scrape the dung out from between their toes. And the ones like Moore, the ones that have moved into town and are now a little scared of their relatives out in the country, worried about "that Joyner blood," they're just as feeble minded, they go to "A & M" or good old state u if papa has the money and then they're worse off than their cotton headed cousins out in the cane bottoms. The thing is, they don't know it, that's the advantage the educated man has down there or anywhere else, unless the schooling doesn't quite take, but it usually does, just like the anti-tetanus. You may puke for a while, but you get over it. Lie down, get a little rest, you'll be all right. If it keeps coming back on you, that's too bad, it's time you realized you're alive, not in paradise, you bastard, you fink, you stinkfingered bum, you satchel headed human being, you. Take that! Biff bam blooey, and a beer-bottle up your twat if you don't like it. That's what made budwiser, that's

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what made Saint Louis famous when Mark Twain went steaming by from Hannibal with a bone on or in his teeth or whatever it was, or is. It's that "Joyner blood," boy, even Marse Robert had it for all his fine manners, and probably Traveler had it, too, it's like a strain of syph, it runs through the whole country down there. Bad blood, and a wild mongoose! Idiots, a whole tribe of pinheaded cretins, there's nothing worth a damn south of Cairo, Illinois, it should be fenced off and then burnt off, and to hell with the volunteers and the butternut boys in gray. They can have their war somewhere else, they can even have this one, but I'm going across the river this afternoon whether yellowsash likes it or not and I hope I get so drunk I don't know where he is or I am.

Schultz cleared his throat noisily.

"Heil Hitler in case we lose," he said, and made a determined effort to go to sleep.

VII

Miller lay neatly on his cot, his hands clasped on his flat stomach, his head pillowed on a small canvas bag stuffed with winter clothing. This position allowed his sleepy looking eyes to gaze at his feet, the toes smeared with the purple liquid which was said to cure athlete's foot, a condition which Miller did not have. A medic had given him the liquid when Miller had seen it in his kit and asked what it was, and he used it as a prophylactic measure, always the soldier making use of everything around him, saving up against the catastrophe which was always to be expected.

Looks like I'd been walking in grape juice, he thought, and the idea pleased him. It would be fun to go swimming in a tank full of grape juice, maybe with a woman; it would be sticky. Wouldn't it look funny when we got out! He turned his head to tell Schultz about it, but decided the mechanic was asleep.

Maybe there'll be some women at the barbecue. Plenty to eat and drink and some women, and someplace to take them, where we can get away from Moore. He worries too much, he's from Texas, he thought, remembering what Schultz had said, and that made him think of the trip to Wichita Falls.

She was a cute little twirp, wandering around the hotel in

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shorts, or was that in Duncan? No, that's where it was, we landed out on that fellow's airport, the private one, but it wasn't much of a strip. His wife drove us into town in a Cadillac with the back seat all greasy and full of oil well tools. They had two ice-boxes as big as the ones at Schofield Barracks and one of them was full of beer, no meat, no milk, nothing but beer. That's where it was, all right, I found her in the hotel where we went after the rich guy's wife got mad at Schultz. A newly-wed, just walking around in that hotel hall. I guess that was the best thing I ever fell over. She was crying at first and she took me down to her room and told me to look in, through the transom because the key was inside, and there was her husband, passed out on the bed with his tallywhacker sticking up in the air. Ho! Miller smiled and rubbed his feet together, remembering the carnival atmosphere of the wartime hotel. You could've stacked arms with that thing and he never would have known the difference. When we finally got the door open and got in bed he didn't even roll over. I wish I'd had a fiddle then, playing the fiddle to her while he lay there like that! Ah, ho! Don't worry about a thing, I told her, just keep moving, keep moving! He'll think he's on a train! She had to laugh at that, I remember, but it would've been better with a fiddle, and it did not occur to him that he had never been taught to play the violin, he never thought of that at all.

I can't figure it out, thought Miller, staring at his feet, I thought these people ran around playing music all the time and here there ain't a fiddle in the whole country, they don't even sing. What a dead-assed bunch, and he thought with sweet longing of the saloons, beer parlors and dance halls of his native land, of the young girls in sweaters and the endless supplies of liquor stacked up behind the bars, the glare of neon and the jukebox jazz. And outside in the huge, black Oklahoma night or the chill bright Colorado night or wherever it might be, the night different in each place but the rest of it alike, were the cars, the taxis, the white stucco motels waiting with dim, naked bulbs burning over doors, the hospital smell of Lifebuoy soap and then next morning the barracks, the camp, where the outside couldn't touch you. You darted out at it, gaily, taking what you wanted, then skipped back through the gate and were safe, a joke on some-

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body! In a week, a month, you were gone, gone away, leaving nothing, missing nothing, you had it all with you in sacks and a foot locker, the wind blowing across a parade ground, tossing paper along on a vast, silent airfield, because you weren't there anymore and so nothing was there. A dozen, twenty Millers left in twenty places but he moving on with the crowd, across the big, friendly country, never quite a part of it, flicking out at it on weekends, then running back inside, happy, not thinking of next year or even next week.

I hope Moore's wrong about it, that they do know how to barbecue, thought Sergeant Miller, trying carefully to place the toes of his right foot between the toes of his left foot, like weaving a basket, and then he stopped and looked up at the roof of the tent, his eyes widening as though he had been actually sleeping. Did the old man say it was a barbecue? I can't remember if he did or not, but didn't Schultz say that's what it was? Anyway, something will happen, he decided, and went back to weaving with his toes.

VIII

Moore was in the grandstand of the ballpark in his home town, watching a rodeo. It was hot, the dust spurted up under the plunging feet of horses and drifted slowly into the stands, choking, dirtying, settling on the red, white and blue bunting which was tacked up everywhere, coating red faces, sweating necks, collecting on hats and white shirts. The crowd ignored the dust, they strained forward toward the men and animals threshing around in the dirt, and Moore felt he was the only one who noticed the thick clouds which settled over them all, plugging their nostrils and ears. He was wearing a white linen suit, he could remember when his father had bought it for him at Goldstein's for a trip to Galveston, and he kept brushing dust from his coat and trousers, his sweating palms smearing the dust into mud. The girl sitting next to him was the most popular in town, he had never been out with her before although he knew who she was and she knew who he was, and he noticed that in the suffocating heat she was wearing a tweed suit which looked expensive and very eastern, not like Texas at all. Probably home from school for the holidays, but why is it so hot? And what are we doing at a rodeo, I never went to rodeos. He tried to ask the girl, but

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she was unable to hear him, she was screaming and cheering at the men in the arena, lean, western men, whose thin, sharp faces could be seen even through the dust, even in the shadows cast by their big hats as they performed feats of brute strength among the dust clouds. The seized the horns of ferocious steers as big as locomotives and overturned them onto the earth, where the steers' legs waved helplessly in the air and their shriveled bull pizzles were terribly exposed to the avid crowd in the stands. He risked a quick glance at the girl, expecting her to be embarrassed, but she was staring down into the arena like everyone else, admiring, eager... and now there were wild horses, with men of wire and muscle astraddle them, arching, bowing, leaping madly while the men clung like bloodsuckers to their backs, their skins seeming stitched, melted into the skin of the horses. Obscene! Moore opened his mouth to cry out, but his tongue was too dry, his throat was coated with gritty, abrasive dust, and at once the men were naked astride the horses and the animals began to copulate, furiously, insanely, the arena was filled with them, they crashed into the boards at the foot of the grandstand and rebounded, not ceasing their mad piston action for an instant. The crowd was on its feet, roaring, the touchdown roar, the knockdown bellow, blood, blood, even the girl was standing in her expensive tweed suit, straining forward on her brown and white pumps, they ignored Moore, who sat on the splintery board seat, his loins shriveled, chilled with cold, dead sweat, alone, terribly, fatally alone in the dust and bedlam. I'm not what they want! he screamed, but could not hear it, and then the rotten, dessicated wooden plank crunched under him and he was falling into the darkness under the stands, plummeting down through the shadows and the smell of feet, of year-old urine, of a thousand crowds and a million rotted hot dogs until with a sickening, upward swoop he lost consciousness...

He was lying on the worn, sour earth under the grandstand. The hot wind tumbled old candy wrappers against him, where they clung like flotsam, piling up against his side. The roar of the crowd sounded distant, like far away surf, rising and falling in slow, regular and restrained rhythm. He started to sit up, putting his right hand out to steady himself, and felt it sink into something warm and soft and repulsive, and

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looked to see that he had placed his hand wrist deep in a pile of human dung. Jerking his hand back as though from a heap of snakes, he cleaned it as best he could with the candy wrappers and got to his feet, holding the hand away from his side, with the stiff fingers spread wide apart. Overhead in the dusty gloom thousands of legs hung down through the board seats, male and female, fat and lean and hairy, twitching and damp with excitement, looking separate and weirdly complete without their bodies. Under this prickly roof of bony, crooked sausages he wandered, crying up to them for help, stumbling on old beer bottles, stopping at each concrete pillar to wipe his filthy hand against the cool, rough surface until he came to one pillar which was hot, columnar, throbbing, and he drew back in horror and fear, turning to run. Then, far away down the long, dim gallery roofed with the tiny legs, he saw something white and blurred, stirring heavily in the dirty twilight. Dread poured into his bloodstream, chilling him, turning his bowels to liquid, and he began to move, slowly, on heavy, weighted feet, then quickly, quickly, faster, until he was hurtling through the gloom, away from the white blur, afraid to look behind him but feeling it there, gaining, drawing closer, and then he looked back and it was on him.

"EEEEEUH!" screamed Sergeant Moore. Schultz jerked his hand from the pilot's shoulder.

"What the hell!" Schultz cried, stepping back quickly from Moore's cot. Moore moaned, slowly opening his eyes, his eyesockets gleaming with sweat, his fists clenched under his chin and his legs drawn up to his stomach.

"My *God*, man!" Schultz stared angrily at Moore. "What did you do that for? You like to scared me to death!"

"Unh," said Moore, licking his lips. He sat up and stared at Schultz, not fully awake, his eyes drugged but frightened.

"I'm sorry," he said after a moment. "What is it?" and he looked around the tent as though expecting to see something new there.

"Time to go," said Schultz. "It's almost two o'clock."

He tugged at the enormous nylon scarf he had wrapped around his neck, the one he had cut that morning from the parachute, pushing the ends down inside the front of his

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greasy coveralls. The shining white stuff stood up almost to his ears, covering his neck like a gigantic, loosened bandage, and Moore, trying to forget his nightware, thought of W. C. Fields as Micawber, looking up at Schultz's puffy, foolishly arrogant face above the wadded stock of the scarf.

"You'll burn up in that thing," Moore said, sitting up on his cot. "What are you wearing it for?" and he hoped Schultz would remove it, leave the uneasy thing in the tent.

"Because it's clean," Schultz said irritably. "It feels good. The Arabs do it," he told Moore. "It actually keeps you cool, something like this," and it gives us something to talk about and it will be my contribution to the barbecue, he thought. You dress up a little for something like this, you never know what's going to happen, right when you least expect it, and he felt pleasantly excited.

"All right, men," he said, looking sternly at Miller. "Pro kits? Raincoats? Helmet liners? Shoes? All right, men, follow me," and he turned and left the tent, followed by Miller in his glittering shoes and clean, wrinkled khakis.

For a moment Moore remained on his cot, not caring, beyond it, and then the panic came back and he scrambled out of the tent and into the glare, following Schultz and Miller.

I should have brushed my teeth, he thought, tasting the sour bitterness in his mouth, but he kept going across the field, hurrying a little to catch up with the others.

IX

They walked abreast in the stubble field, the sun struck at them, the landscape wavered and floated, and in the far, far distance, northward up this valley which somewhere met the other, crucial valley, the inaccessible mountains looked flat, thin and grainy in the haze. The air smelled of heat, mountains and very fine, faint old dust, the dust of rock and clay, of grain and dried, ancient dung, a rich, sweet and rotten smell like an Algerian vineyard.

After Schultz had taken a dozen steps the white scarf around his neck was clammy and adhesive. The nylon did not absorb the sweat as cotton would have and he felt the drops rolling down his back and chest, tickling like chaff under his coveralls.

I might as well be at a lynching in Friar's Point, Mississippi,

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he thought, it's as hot as a tin roof in New Braunfels. Right now I'd like to be in the ugliest spot on earth, the St. Louis Union Station. I'd take a cab to the Coronado and go down in the cellar, down in the Coal Hole, and spend the afternoon telling lies, coveralls, nylon and all, and I'd try to forget all about the Union Station, all the things that have happened to me in the Union Station. Or maybe The Kansas City Union Station, where you come out the doors and look across the street at Foch's phallic symbol up on the hill, the silo, the never no more. That's typical; they turned off their eternal fire and chiseled Lindbergh's name off of it when the war started, and you couldn't have the Mikado and the Lunts had to quit that business about the Russians in Finland. The fire was steam with colored lights on it, the Japs could see that from Pearl Harbor, you betcha. Anyway, I could take a cab from there in the late afternoon, the sun just down behind the post office, and go to the Peanut, out in the garden in back, on the gravel and the tin tables, and I'd take this scarf and hang it on Ardonia's meek brown neck and I'd say there, there it is, Ardonia, this is how it was, like a nylon fleece, and I'd say dear, it was hell, you can't imagine the funny people I ran into, bring me an order of fried baby bottoms and a glass of beer and I'll tell you all about it. The happy sound of walking on the clean gravel, and the cold tin of the tables in the shade, and the cold, cold beer going down, biting and fizzy, and Ardonia like new chocolate in her starched blue uniform, with the scarf hanging down like something out of a church.

And that's not Southern, thought Schultz, glancing quickly at Moore, and that's why I like it, I didn't know it then but that's one of the reasons.

"Is it true what they say about Dixie," he chanted, almost singing it, "does the sun really shine all the t-i-i-i-me. Does it, Moore? Is it seven, seven times hotter than it oughta be, little Moses?"

"All right," Moore said, not looking at Schultz.

"Folks keep eatin' possum till they can't eat no more," Miller said, very happy to remember the line, and he looked from Schultz to Moore, half expecting them to join him in song.

"Never mind that nigger stuff," Moore said, but he still

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did not look at the others. "That's the only thing you people ever heard of, the nigger part."

"What's a possum?" said Miller. "I hear about that all my life, but what is it, anyway?"

"It's a rat," said Schultz. "A great, big rat, as big as a fox terrier."

"What? You mean to tell me it's a rat? You mean to say they eat rats? A big mouse?"

"They'll eat anything down south, where've you been. They even eat snakes, they can them and sell them all over the damn place."

"Well, for Christ's sake..."

"Just like a Vienna sausage. Didn't you ever have a snake sandwich? You should have told me, they had them in Whiskey Falls... ask him, he probably used to take 'em to school before the hot lunch program came in..."

"...program?"

"Never mind, you got it this morning. You're a moron, he's about right."

"Fuck you."

"Never mind, I said."

They stepped from the low, crumbling bank into the riverbed, a glaring, powdery white sheet of pitted rock. They crossed it and climbed the opposite bank. Within twenty steps they were out of the aged tree line and approaching the farmhouse.

It was a large, two-story building, worn and softened, with a broken tile roof, or roofs, since each room appeared to have been conceived and built separately. Some of the bricks were thin, others thick, and they varied in color from pale, bleached yellow to hearty, raw reds and faded pinks. Even the newest bricks looked old, and the building gave the impression of gradually fading, settling in upon itself, until in time it would become indistinguishable from the earth under it and around it. The sergeants had seen a thousand like it.

Two long, narrow outbuildings like stables or slave quarters extended from the rear wall of the main building to form a courtyard, with a stone fence and gate at the open end. The noise of an Italian crowd came from this enclosure, increasing in volume as several small boys rushed through the gate to tell those within that the Americans were coming. There

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were shouts, and a dozen heads appeared above the wall, looking at the sergeants, who had halted near the main building, waiting for something, a sign, the first movement of the afternoon.

Suddenly, the face of an old woman appeared in a window almost at Schultz's elbow. She glared at him, then withdrew her head and they heard her shouting in Italian inside the house.

"Here are the barbarians!" the old woman cried.

"Silence!" a male voice answered at once. "You fool, these are Americans."

"Aiuh!" the woman said, a despairing grunt. "What's the difference? These have rubber soles on their shoes, that's the difference. They'll want the same things."

"I ask you to curb your filthy tongue," the man said. "These are my guests, this is my house."

"Guests!" screamed the woman. "You'll have a brothel if you bring in such guests as these, idiot!"

"Would that I had left you in the one where I found you!" shouted the man, and there was a great clash of falling pans.

"Better I than your daughters, then, and your granddaughters," the woman wailed, and more pots clanged on a stone floor. "Why not sell us all, put us in the Via Roma naked to the stomach, with jet beads on our underwear?"

"Mother of God," said the man. "Sainted Mary."

"What the hell are they yelling about?" said Miller. "Must be something to do with chow."

The old man came out of the open door and yelled something over his shoulder before smiling and nodding at the Americans.

"You are most welcome," he said in Italian. "Please pay no attention to that filth in the kitchen, she's just a nervous old slut. My wife," he added apologetically, and still in Italian, "but she did not go to the great New York with me."

"Good old New York," Miller said, hearing the words.

The old man seized Miller's elbow and pulled him rapidly along to the gate in the stone fence. The crowd in the enclosure sent up a great shout and surrounded them.

"The Americans! The Americans!" they cried. Old men and women, young men and girls and children barely able to walk surged happily around the startled sergeants. Miller

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tried to free his arm, but the old man increased the grip of his knotted fingers.

Moore decided at once that everyone present was drunk except the children. The older men and women were drunkest, and several brown-skinned, wrinkled old women in rusted black lay on the ground next to the buildings. A smell of raw wine, cheese and garlic came from the excited people in the farmyard in a wave as solid as the heat Moore had felt under the airplane wing.

"What a barbecue!" Schultz shouted, grabbing a full wine bottle from a smiling man who immediately offered him another.

"Wait a minute!" cried Moore, scowling and shaking his head at a young woman who held out a bottle and then pressed a full glass to his lips. He choked, spluttering, and the bright red wine splashed down his coveralls. The drops which struck the ground were sucked in at once by the dried earth. Miller and Schultz laughed at him, so did the girl, so did everyone but the old man, who looked worried and mopped ineffectually at Moore's clothing with a dirty rag which he pulled from his pocket.

"What's going on here?" Moore shouted at him. He grabbed the rag from the old hand and threw it on the ground, then seized the black sleeved arm and shook it. "What are you people up to, anyway?"

"Please forgive her, Captain," the old man said in Italian. "She's just trying to make you welcome, you know."

He turned suddenly to the girl and raised his hand as though to strike her.

"Clumsy imbecile!" he shouted. The crowd laughed, and the girl stuck her tongue out at the old man.

"A father's curse," she said, and spat on the ground at his

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feet. The crowd laughed again. The old man grinned and shrugged his shoulders.

Moore seized his arm again.

"Listen," he said. "Tell me what's going on. You can speak English. You said you'd been to New York, didn't you? This isn't just a party, is it?"

"Yes, yes, New York," said the old man, bobbing his head rapidly up and down. "Magnificent! You know Via Mulberry Street?"

"Come on!" shouted Miller above the crowd noise. "Grab some bottles and let's sit down somewhere."

He and Schultz had already started elbowing their way toward the other end of the farmyard. Moore started to object, but the girl who had spilled the wine on him took his arm and pulled him after the others. Miller and Schultz were seated on ornate chairs with horsehair padding on the seats and armrests. They had bottles of wine and glasses and were talking loudly in English to the Italians who surrounded them. Moore was shoved into a similar chair and the girl, laughing, sat in his lap. She tilted another glass to his lips and he drank, fighting for breath, afraid to touch her without being able to see what he was doing. When the glass was empty she got up and went away.

Miller was singing, keeping time for himself by waving his wine bottle.

"Hoy Marie, hoy Marie," he chanted. "Cuando bello ritorno aqui."

"My God!" shouted Schultz. "Listen to the boy! What is it, Miller, yiddish?"

Moore pushed away several hands which offered him wine bottles and bent toward Schultz.

"What's going on?" he demanded. "They act like they were nuts. Do you suppose it's a religious festival or something?" and he looked around nervously, frowning and shaking his head at the smiling faces which surrounded them.

I knew it, thought Schultz. It's beginning already.

"It's a party," he said. "They love us, by God!" and he wrapped his arm around a girl who stood near him and looked up at her, giggling. Tilting his wine bottle carefully, he poured a thin red stream onto her bare feet. The wine ran in quick little rivulets through the dirt on the girl's feet

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and she laughed as though Schultz had tickled her armpits.

Moore looked away with a groan of disgust. Do other people find themselves saddled with ridiculous, idiotic things the way I do? Is it even possible that someone once found himself with two men like these, in a country like this one, hot, smelly, and foreign, a nightmare day and night, and that thing up north there, being somehow made worse and worse by the two men. Defiant, but of nothing, resenting me more than they resent the ones on the other side. Why aren't we countrymen instead of arguers and liars, behaving like lunatics, why can't they let it all go and settle for just that one thing, that one feeling? Surely that's important enough by itself, you wouldn't need anything else. And in the meantime what will we tell the Captain? He's probably leaving the CP right now, with that smart alec hillbilly driver of his, coming down to check up on us, and everything just lying there, airplanes, radios, maps, even the machine gun on the half-track right where anybody could walk off with it. This is crazy, it's impossible, what will we tell him. It isn't just a party, it doesn't feel like that. Right in the middle of the afternoon? It's more than that, they're expecting something, they're too excited, and he looked with distaste at the happy, sweating, mobile faces around him. It's abnormal, he thought, and he went to Schultz and seized his arm.

"Listen," he said in Schultz's ear. "Let's get out of here, there's still time, there's something the matter with these people, there's something wrong..."

Schultz hiccupped and made a sour face.

"This stuff is green as hell," he said. "It's like that African rotgut."

Moore pushed his face closer to Schultz's ear, so close he could smell sweat and oily skin.

"Suppose they've all got typhus or something?" he said, trying to sound reasonable. He felt fingers plucking at his collar and whirled around.

"Damn it, get away!" he screamed at a boy behind him. "There's something going on, I tell you," he said in Schultz's ear. "They don't act this way every day, I've never seen any of them drunk before. It's almost like the middle ages, you remember, the tarantella or whatever it was..."

"Oh, for God's sake, why don't you have a drink or some-

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thing," Schultz said. "Everybody's just having a good time, that's all. I told you what the old man said, it's a barbecue or some damn thing."

Moore shoved him viciously, almost pushing him from his ornate chair.

"Barbecue!" he shouted. "You're as bad as Miller. These people never heard of a barbecue! That wasn't what he meant and you know it! It's mixed up somewhere..."

"Then go ask the old bastard!" Schultz cried, recovering from the surprise of Moore's push. "You worry too much, you always have!"

Moore tried a sneer, staring at the back of the mechanic's sweaty neck, feeling too conspicuous in front of the Italians.

He went back to his chair and sat down in it. The Italians chattered and laughed, they waved bottles at each other and offered them to him, they enjoyed themselves. The scene reminded him of a photograph in the National Geographic magazine, so long ago, in his father's dim study on the second floor, where the light was always bad and the room used less and less until they had stored magazines and old toys and hats in it, a picture of a group of wild, scarred African tribesmen capering around a ridiculous throne, a throne made from a battered old shoeshine stand, with cracked, imitation leather seats and pitted brass supports for the shod feet which were thousands of miles away, supporting now a horny, impudent black foot covered with clay, dung and ashes, elongated and flat, corded like a frog's foot...

The girl who had spilled the wine on him came back. She was carrying a full wine bottle and a heavy, smeared glass which she thrust into his protesting hands. He shook his head vigorously, no, exaggerating the movement, trying to make her understand. He bent over and placed the bottle and the glass on the hard earth by his chair, but she immediately retrieved them and placed them in his hands again. He put them down and she put them back in his lap. He jumped at the touch of the heavy bottle, then seized it by the neck to prevent it from rolling from his knees to the ground. The girl giggled and pulled the cork.

"Stop it," he said to her, "can't you leave me alone? I don't want it, it's too hot..." but she was lifting his arm again, pushing the bottle to his mouth and, unable to halt

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the bottle without violence, he allowed it to clink against his teeth and then was drinking from the green bottle, thinking, it's probably cleaner than the glass, anyway.

He took the bottle from his mouth, from her hand, and placed it on the ground. There were cries of approval from the people standing around his chair. They drank from their bottles too, and made encouraging signs to him with their free hands.

"Oh, lordy," he said, feeling the wine burn in his churning stomach, "what's going on here, anyway..."

The girl sat in his lap and started unbuttoning the top of his coveralls but he pushed her away roughly and sat limp and hot in his horsehair chair. She came back with the bottle, making him drink from it again, and then again, until he pushed her away.

"I'd like to get this straightened out," he said to the crowd, and then he belched...

And what was the name of the boy who burped at the party? They were all in the sixth grade then and it was one of the kids who lived out of town a way, a farm boy, really, since he lived too close to town for them to call it a ranch. A farm was all right, too, if your father didn't do the work himself, and there were riding horses. That's what the others thought but I didn't. It was Dorothy's party, the first organized, announced party he had ever attended, he remembered, with Japanese lanterns in the backyard. She lived over near the entrance to Cameron park, and the terrible thing happened

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in the dining room, where Dorothy's mother had herded everybody, drinking the dark, sickly grape punch. The boy who lived outside of town had belched as they stood there in their party clothes, a great, ripping, farmyard belch which sounded like a grown man, and they had stood, rigid with horror. I thought I would die, just feel a terrible squeezing pain in my stomach and die, I was so embarrassed.

"Grape jelly always makes me belch," the farm boy said, and he smiled gently at Dorothy's mother.

The girls screamed with laughter then, and the boys guffawed and snorted, making fun of him, but the farm boy kept his quiet smile, not embarrassed at all. I went outside, it was cool on the grass, shaking with shame and afraid I would be sick, which would be the worst thing, worse than the belch. I thought they would hold it against me, as though he were my best friend, or a relative, and that would be terrible I wanted everybody to like me, and I think they did... but they would despise the belcher's friends! I hardly knew him, but for a long time I thought I would be blamed for it. How long did I go around worrying about it?...

He felt a bubble of gas form in his stomach and rise in his throat. He tried to check it, and hiccupped.

The crowd laughed, they liked him now, because he was drinking their wine after all. I don't care, he thought, I don't care whether you do or not and it's terrible stuff, and he looked at the bottle. It was almost empty, so he accepted another.

Now the old man, the particular old man, came out of the crowd in front of Schultz. He looked happier than before, as though something difficult and uncertain had been accomplished.

"She is here!" he shouted in Italian, and smiled at Schultz.

The crowd became more excited, it gathered itself and began moving away from the Americans, toward the other end of the farmyard.

The old man stood on tiptoe in front of the three sergeants, shouting at them and waving his hands toward the retreating crowd.

"Tell him to buzz off," Miller said sleepily. He was slouched in his chair with his eyes closed. The ground around him was littered with bottles, some of them still full.

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Schultz stood up. "He wants us to follow the mob," he said. "Must be time to eat."

Moore's chair leaped away from him and flipped over on its back as he got to his feet. He frowned at it, then stared at the old man, squinting his eyes as though they hurt.

"Let's get out of here," he said. "Let's go back where we belong."

Miller sat up, brightening at the sound of Moore's voice.

"Where's that?" he said happily. "Where the hell do you think that is? Is there a saloon you know of around here?"

He stood up and began jogging around on his feet, almost shadow boxing, not looking at Moore.

"I think that's a damn good idea," he said in his high, happy voice. "That's the first sensible thing I heard since I cashed in my px checks. Let's go back where we belong!"

"Shut up," Moore said. "Shut up shut up shut up."

The old man nodded quickly at Miller and seized his arm. The sergeant folded the little Italian in his arms and began an exaggerated waltz with him in the heat of the farmyard.

"Mother of God," said the old man, his voice muffled against Miller's chest, his left arm extended rigidly, his left hand in Miller's hand, his right hand involuntarily on the sergeant's shoulder.

"Hoy Marie!" yelled Miller. "Hoy Marieeee!"

Timidly, fearful of offending the sergeant, the old man tried to pull away from his partner, but Miller held him more tightly and continued his scraping and stumbling on the beaten earth.

"Hoy Marie! Hoy Marie!" he shouted. "Cuando bello ritorno aqui!"

"What's he saying?" the old man cried in Italian, twisting his neck, trying to look at Moore or Schultz. "Is this the way of things in New York, friends?"

Miller released him suddenly and sat down hard on the ground. He watched the old man run tiptoeing to the gate and disappear beyond it.

"Nothing's any damn good in this country," he said sadly. "A bunch of pallbearers."

"You're the corpse," Schultz said. "You and Moore, you're the corpse. They're going to put you birds in one of those fancy black wagons with the big plate glass windows, like

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they have in Naples, with silver trimmings all over, and haul you down that lonesome road. I feel sorry for you, boy," the mechanic said, looking intently at Miller. "It makes me sad to think about it." He drank from his bottle and then cradled it carefully on his knees and looked sadly at Miller.

"You're a good boy, Miller," he said. "You're kind of a jerk sometimes but you're a good boy, you poor, motherless orphan, you. You just never had any education, that's all that's wrong with you, Miller. That and the fact that the army got you too soon and the CCCs before that and your aunt owns that silly damned business in Illinois—what is it again?"

"They make cosmetics for mortuaries," Miller said, sitting on the ground with his arms around his knees and his chin on his arms.

"That's it," Schultz said after taking another drink. "Vanishing cream for the stiffs. I knew it was something that nutty but I couldn't think of it for a minute. Lipstick and rouge and powder and mascara for the departed, by God. It's something to think about, all right. It's essential. I'll bet they don't even slap a luxury tax on that stuff. I've thought about it ever since you first told me. I can't get it out of my mind. I can't figure out how they ever thought it up, it's so wonderful. Do you suppose the relatives of the departed insisted upon it, or did some smart cookie of a mortician think of it? To begin with, I mean. How does an idea like that get around, that's what I'd like to know. And the hell of it is," he said slowly, "you can't get a damn thing out of those morticians!"

He pounded his first angrily on his thigh, but not too angrily, being careful about the wine bottle.

"They're a close-mouthed bunch!" he cried indignantly. "Yes sir! They'd never tell you how a thing like that got started, oh, no. Bunch of button-mouths, think they have ethics, for Christ's sakes! Let me tell you, Miller," and he looked fondly at Miller, looking at him as a father would look, "I've had dealings with those people. There was a time in my life when they fascinated me, like to drove me nuts. I was practically queer on the subject. I pestered the life out of the morticians in St. Louis until they took to calling up my father and asking him to keep me away. I wanted to

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know! that's all it was, I just wanted to know what the hell went on down there, but those jerks wouldn't let me in on the secret."

He pulled the slippery scarf from around his neck, trailing it into his lap and onto the ground. When he mopped the sweat from his face the scarf came away gray and dingy. He continued to talk, like one scientist to another, telling of his difficulties on a research project.

"It wasn't that I never got *in*," he said to Miller, who had found a bottle and was staring sadly at it. "I got *in*, all right. You can always get in, through the door from the alley, a window in summertime, even through the front door, when nobody's looking. And even if they are, what the hell, they haven't got anything to hide, have they? But God damn it," he said with exasperation, "the stiffs were always gone! They always sneaked them out just before I got there or locked them up or some damn thing. They were there in the *caskets*, of course," he said, raising his hands quickly as though to stop a remark from Miller, "I often saw them lying down in their quilted satin boxes, they look like they'd been carved out of Ivory soap and painted with cheap watercolors, like they'd been Pranged, which of course they had, but," and he spaced his words carefully and distinctly as though this were the crux of his speech, "they were never on the slabs."

He drained the last wine from his bottle and threw it away.

"Why don't you shut up," said Moore from his chair. "Those people have all gone so why don't you shut up?"

He stared at Schultz, working his eyebrows up and down, trying to focus his glare.

Schultz rose and walked over to a full winebottle, took it by the neck and returned to his seat. His movements were brisk and purposeful. He looked like a well-adjusted businessman now, happily discussing some problem of buttons or wholesale shoes, certain the problem would be solved in time, hugging himself to himself, delighted with what he was. He ignored Moore.

"I won't say my curiosity is as strong now as it was then," he said, after frowning thoughtfully at Miller. "I can really take a corpse or leave it alone, nowadays, unless it's someone I know, of course. Then I don't want to have anything to do with it. The trouble, and the uproar! Really, you can't

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beat a good civilian murder, that's the best kind. It's more interesting, more personal than this crap over here. In civilian life a murder makes you squirm a little bit, you figure, what the hell, that might have been me, on one side or the other, either killer or victim, and it gives you something to think about for a few hours, or minutes, anyway.

"I got in on a good murder once, in a little burg outside of East St. Louis. I went with a pal of mine who was a reporter on the Post-Dispatch, but he didn't last long there. I wonder whatever happened to him? Anyway, this farmer had hit his wife on the head with the blunt end of an axe and then shot her through the left tit with a revolver. I may have the sequence reversed there, but I don't think it makes a hell of a lot of difference. The local undertaker had her in a wire basket next to his radiator, trying to thaw her out when we got there. She'd been lying in the house about a week in the wintertime with no heat, you know, and she was a real stiff. The undertaker was drunk and so was his wife, damndest thing you ever saw, and while he talked to us he leaned on an old shriveled up grandmother, naked as a jay bird. 'I think she's softened up a bit,' he'd say, and he'd toddle over and shove on the victim's bare belly. We all had several drinks and before it was all over we all had a good shove at her, both on the stomach and the skull, which was busted like a cracked coconut and squeaked when you pushed on it. A hell of a thing. All the undertaker's kids were in and out of the room all night and I kept noticing they all wore a little gold charm around their necks on a string, like a church medal, and when I finally got hold of one and took a good look it was a little gold barrel, like you get on Seagram's gin, the yellow kind.

"I haven't thought of that in years," he said, looking fondly at Miller. "You must have reminded me of it, you and Moore in that black coach with the silver trimming and your loveable old aunt in Illinois. Do you think you could get me a job with her outfit after the war? Maybe I could be the falsies representative. Schultz's Pneumatic Boobs for Concave Chested Cadavers. What a franchise for some town in Kansas, southwestern Kansas would be a good spot for that, or even Omaha. Listen!" he cried excitedly to Miller. "Have they ever thought of that? You could even have shoulder pads

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for the male stiffs, see, well-made ones out of sponge rubber, maybe come in five, six sizes, fit anybody, or excuse me, boy, fit anyone."

"Will you please shut up," Moore said. His eyes were closed and he sagged in his chair, about to fall out of it. Schultz looked at him angrily.

"Just because you're going to be buried in a mattress cover, don't think everybody else is," he said. "This is a hell of a thing we've run across here. Of course I can understand why you and maybe even Miller maybe don't see it like I do because you won't be around to enjoy the fruits of this wonderful, wonderful idea. Even in a depression people have to be buried, don't you get it? Even if you're on the WPA or in the CCCs like poor old Miller boy here, you have to be buried, for Christ's sake! Cradle to the grave, the government will pay for it, they'll pay for anything. What do you think those mattress covers cost? Good canvas, tight stitching by some horny handed girl in Waco, Texas, hell, you could get twenty dollars for one in Africa, remember? That's good stuff you and Miller are going to be bundled up in, riding in that black and silver coach, winding down the road from Capodichino with the stragglers in black strung out behind. Remember that, Miller? Remember the coach, on the road down from Capodichino, the last time we went down for a bath? They even had a couple of horses, Moore, I wish you could have seen it. The most piddly-assed funeral I ever saw in my life, looked like the whole works was going to bust down any minute right in the road and roll the casket into the ditch. They tell me they use those caskets over and over again, just part of the dressing to get you out to the cemetery, that's all. I'm afraid they won't even change that for you boys, although you're their liberators and their glorious allies and you fly the little birds and holler into the little radio and I don't know what all. No caskets, not even for you. You can use it for the ride, but after that it's just the old mattress cover. It would be quite a thing, though, at that, if we could get the Italians to run it," he said, and he smiled at Miller, then at Moore. "They've probably never handled a GI funeral in one of those coaches and I'll bet there'd be a hell of an uproar, the God damned Italians would all want to get into the act and too many would and they'd probably

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drop you both before they got you loaded, drop your stitched-up mattress covers right in the street. And then some bird, a skinny fellow probably with a mustache and a tight black suit, all dressed up for your sakes, he'll take out a piece of chalk the Germans left in the postoffice or someplace, some little piece they overlooked, and he'll write on the sides of the coach, 'Viva Americani!' or something like that and off you'll go, on your way to the marble orchard. You know, I'm out of vino."

"Under your chair," Miller said.

I'm surprised Moore didn't bust out crying, thought Schultz, reaching for the bottle. I thought I put it plainly enough, but he must not be tuned in, I'll have to keep scratching around on his crystal. What'll I tell him about, Woodrow Wilson? The Woodrow Wilson Post of the Veterans of by God Foreign by God Wars or the Woodrow Wilson they talk about out at the veterans home near Leavenworth? Where they stand out on the porch all day long, with their belts knotted in their fists, lashing at the pillars, calling Woodrow Wilson every dirty name they can think of. But of course those guys are screwy, they think they've got Woodrow strung up there, they don't know he gave them the slip and that's nothing but red bricks and cement, if it hasn't fallen down by now, and for Moore you have to make it sound normal, he's afraid of anything else. Even queers wear galoshes, Moore! I wish I could tell him that, but he wouldn't know what I was talking about, he's never been in the Wichita bus station at three in the morning. The saddest place in the world, they'll have a mass suicide there some day, there won't be anybody left but the ticket seller and the shine boy and the cabbies, waiting for the 3:15 from Junction City or Medicine Lodge or wherever they come from at that time, maybe nowhere. I can't think of anyplace where anybody would deliberately fix it so they were going to arrive at that station at 3:15 a.m. Maybe the buses are all empty, pounding down the bricks on highway 81, coming in from Newton and Valley Center and Emporia, empty, with nothing aboard but the drivers and bundles of the Kansas City Times, as if they didn't have enough newspapers in the damned town already. The Boy Scouts make Mummy take the paper so they can fill up the basement with trash and make a good

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showing on Paper Day. The smart kids load their bundles with tire irons and jack handles, when they aren't using them to break into parked cars. Getting ahead! In a few years we'll have them over here with us, they're here already, in fact, and they still get the papers from home! Yes sir! We get all the news from home: the head red cap at the depot retires after forty-five years of loyal, backbreaking labor and we know all about it, we know he got the gold watch, we know what he said, all together now, "I just want to relax and do a little fishing." That's it. In three years he'll be dead, and no fish, the fish don't give a shit for him or anybody else, and why should they? He can take his Pflueger and go pflueg himself with it. And we'll all remember what he told the pimple-faced jerk from the Times: "Why, no, nothing unusual has ever happened to me in my forty-five years of service for the Kansas City Terminal Railway company, nothing at all..." And of course it hasn't, Jack, just lust, robbery, adultery, sodomy and other assorted shenanigans, worn out souls flaring into cinders like skyrockets right in front of his placid red cap's eyes. But it isn't unusual! He's right! He didn't want to bother the readers with a lot of piddling crap they knew about already, and he's right, they're sick of it.

You want to hear about that, Moore? You want to hear what they'd do to you if you ever got back? What'll it be, the Wichita bus station on the dogwatch with all the fags painted up, waiting for something, something, anything, "a climax," one of them said. Or do you want to wait for your climax in the railroad station, or the First National Bank, or in the universal Men's Room, developing hemorrhoids while you try to kill a little time. Actually, they don't know what a break they're getting, the Moores of this world don't. They don't realize how wonderful everything really is, so much better than even that splendid idea they have of it. Why should Moore worry about all that stuff that worried me. He's young, he has good eyesight and no hemorrhoids, so sooner or later one of those 88s will connect, it happens every day, or maybe even a 40 millimeter, or a 20, or even a rifle bullet, they can reach you easy at 3,000 feet. Or, if you're real lucky, if you'd like to make Ernie Pyle's column, maybe you'll get hit by one of our own shells, one you've just asked for over the radio. That happens, too, but not so often that

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it's stale news, it's still an item for Ernie and the other bloodsuckers...

Lots of times you can feel them, Miller had said. Bumpety bump, right underneath, when they let go a lot of them at once it's like a lot of real hard downdrafts, one right after the other. Some guy at corps got his prop hit, it didn't go off, just smeared gray paint on the blade and busted it all to hell. A smoke shell, that gray paint is on the smoke shells, Miller had said.

Ah, yes, thought Schultz: and what's on the others, a stenciled greeting from the commander in chief? Pull in your balls, squeeze your asshole tight, put your head between your knees, here it is! from your's truly, FDR. Maybe I am getting old, at that.

"You know, I'm thirty-eight years old," he said.

"Oh, for Christ's sakes!" Miller drank from his bottle and looked bored.

"It's different for you birds," Schultz went on. "My feet hurt me all the time. You know I never even finished a hike at Sill. I should never have been in the army at all, and now you think I'm a jerk."

He blew his nose on his scarf.

"You are," Moore said, not opening his eyes. "You're a jerk."

Moore wanted to move from the chair, to leave the farmyard and return to the tent, but he felt dizzy and sick. If he moved he would vomit, and he had always hated to vomit, even at home where he could go and lie on the cool sheets of his bed afterward. Here, in the heat and foreign smell, it would be terrible. I won't do it, he thought. I'll hold it in, like I did so many times at school when I was a kid, moving as little as possible, not moving at all.

Never mind Schultz and his coach and his mattress covers, we should get back to the line, it's really better there, somehow... the fine feeling when everything is going well, like hunting. And you had to be clever, too, you had to think ahead of the guns, some people were good at it and others weren't, you had to think yourself into the frightened truck driver or the motorcyclist, although it was always best to wait until the motorcycle stopped at a house, or in a grove of trees. That usually meant a headquarters of some sort.

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And you had to see the muzzle flash in that one instant when it stabbed orange in the gray and mark it exactly, like sticking a pin into a detailed map. And shifting the bursts: if you could make a four hundred yard shift and get on they didn't have a chance, it was there in the split second when they first heard it coming, and right behind it, in the same aerial groove, six more coming, all in the air at once, before the first of the six burst. We have wonderful gunners, he thought, excellent, they're a thousand times more important than Schultz and Miller. And then he heard the crowd coming back through the gate.

IX

The Italians were shouting, and in their midst was a large white animal which they were leading on a rope and urging from behind with cries and blows.

"My God," said Schultz, "here comes our barbecue. It's still alive."

The animal was a white cow, a sad looking animal whose skin hung in flapping folds around its neck and from its leg joints. Despite the tattoo of sticks on its rump and the shouts of the crowd it came slowly and calmly toward the sergeants.

Oh, no, thought Moore. My Lord, no. Are they going to kill that thing right here and eat it?

"Fresh meat," cried Schultz. "On the table, not the altar, that's right. Where's the french fries?"

He stood up, rocking a little, and went forward to meet the cow. Miller followed, doing his little dancing shuffle.

"How long does it take to barbecue something?" Miller said, very happy. "They won't be able to get that thing done tonight, will they? I could eat a horse!"

"You're close, boy, very close," Schultz said, patting the cow's neck. "A fugitive from Chicago! The race is not always to the Swifts!"

He turned to the Italians and made eating motions. "When?" he said in their language. "When eat?"

"No, no!" they shouted, laughing. "*Niente mangiare!*" and they made signs with their hands for something else and said it in Italian.

"My God!" cried Schultz.

"What is it?" said Miller, impatient. "What did they say?"

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"Didn't you see them?" said Schultz. "Didn't you see what they did?" and he did it with his hands.

"Us?" said Miller, his sleepy eyes widening. "They mean us?" and he jiggled frenziedly in his dance. "I never tried screwing a cow before."

Schultz shook his head.

"No," he said, "and it kind of worries me a little. I think we'd come out of this better if at least one of us had. These people are really something now, aren't they? Anything for the by God Americani, that's their motto," and he patted the cow affectionately and smiled at the people around him.

Miller hopped rapidly on one foot and then the other, his fists jerking out in quick punching movements. He thought it unlikely that Schultz's diagnosis was correct but he found the idea interesting and was busily going over it in his mind, changing and fitting the images together as best he could, trying to work out the details.

"You never know about people," Schultz said, smiling at a man who gave him a bottle of wine. "I'll admit it seems a little queer when you first think of it, but what the hell, I suppose we've all heard of things like that, haven't we? Reminds me of a hunchbacked girl used to come in the Hotel Muehlebach in Kansas City, and you always want to remember it's the Hotel Muehlebach, not the Muehlebach hotel, there's a hell of a difference. This girl was a mess, a regular mistake, she sold flowers in the bar there, but she got knocked up by an ex-prize fighter who hung around Twelfth and Baltimore, carried his money in his shoe, clear inside his sock, so he wouldn't have to buy drinks for anybody. He didn't, either, all the bartenders knew where the money was and they didn't want any part of it. They used to pee in his whiskey occasionally, he was such a no good bastard, but they wouldn't let him buy anybody a drink. The arrangement suited him fine, sort of taking the bitter with the sweet, you might say, arf and arf. Well what I'm getting at is nobody but that guy could have gotten that girl pregnant, it wouldn't have occurred to anybody else, he was a real screwy looey. In a way, it's the same thing with this cow here."

Moore made a choking sound and wine gushed from his mouth, wetting his clothes before he could bend over. Then

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he leaned forward, too late, swaying in misery as a trickle of wine and saliva rolled down his chin, his neck and disappeared under his coveralls.

I want to lie down, he thought, I want to go back, go back, and he felt himself falling, unable to put out his hands, and hit the dirt hard, the jar making him breathless. His stomach jumped in spasms and he retched again, lying on the ground.

I have to go home, he thought, I can't tell the teacher or anybody, I just have to go home before I do it again out in the hall and somebody sees me.

But he was not home, and after a while he sat up carefully, supporting himself with his arms stiff and quivering, staring at the group in the farmyard, at the cow.

"He's back, fellows!" yelled Schultz. "There goes Ole Thirteen, back into the game! Just a little Charleyhorse, that's all it was, after all. Boy!" he cried, looking wildly around. "Boy!" he called, and bent over to look under the placid cow's belly. The movement was too quick and he fell to his knees. Rising quickly and briskly, dusting his trousers, he ignored his tumble. "Oh, there you are!" he shouted, seizing Miller by the arm. "Here, boy, get this out to Ole Thirteen right away. Don't let him swallow any, just rinse his mouth with it!" and he handed Miller a half-empty wine bottle.

"The cup that cheers," Miller said sadly and drank from the bottle, not moving toward Moore.

"It does, of course it does!" said Schultz. He leaned back against the cow's flank, throwing his left arm up to lie on her back as on a fireplace mantel. He stood there like the genial host in front of his fireplace, smiling and bobbing his head up and down at Miller, the guest, agreeing with this transient visitor.

"I've often thought of that," he said, nodding as though he had not heard Miller say this a thousand times.

"Past regrets and future fears," Miller said, looking at Schultz with his sleepy eyes.

"It's the little things that count in this world and don't you ever forget it."

A group of men appeared in the gate, running forward and then back, leading a large white bull into the farmyard

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with a rope. The bull snorted and swung his head, holding it low, trying to hook with his horns in a half-hearted way. He advanced with quick little running steps, then halted, tugging gently against the rope which was tied to a ring in his nose. The Italians jerked on the rope and he trotted forward again, protesting.

The cow moved suddenly, nervously, and the bull seemed to see her for the first time. He halted, stared at her, then raised his head in a bawling bellow.

"What in the world," said Moore from his seat on the ground. Still dizzy from the wine and vomiting, he looked at the scene in the farmyard without understanding it. Miller was jiggling in his little dance, Schultz was slapping the cow on her back and the Italians were capering around the two animals, shouting at each other. More Italians came running in through the gate, carrying baskets filled with wine bottles. The bull came easily and steadily now, paying no atttention to the shouting Italians, his eyes fixed on the skittish cow.

"Hey," Moore called, trying to get up. "Hey, somebody head him off! Wave something at him!"

"It's waving, it's waving!" shouted Schultz, and he slapped the cow's rump. "He sees it Moore, don't get excited! We've got everything under control over here!"

I knew it, thought Moore. All the filth, all the blood and spit and dung are coming out now, and he managed to get to his feet. He stood there, holding his arms slightly away from his body to steady himself, watching the bull move toward the cow.

"Don't let him!" he called weakly, but no one paid any attention. Schultz had run forward to meet the bull and was trotting along beside the great, rolling bulk, uttering cries of encouragement. At a safe distance Miller jogged happily up and down, his arms shooting out spasmodically.

Moore was terrified, and for some reason which he had no time to understand he knew the bull must not reach the cow. He moved, he tried to run, but his legs refused him and he fell dizzily after stumbling a few steps. Drunkenness washed over him in waves, coming and going, echoing in his ears, and he watched the bull, like a slow motion film, the bull throwing himself back on his hind legs, rearing and trembling a moment before he plunged forward.

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Moore's despairing cry was lost in the shouts of the Italians. As the bull reared their voices slid up the scale, then fell as the animal dropped from the cow's back and stood on his four legs again. Their voices were low and sad as they stood looking at the bull.

"He missed!" cried Schultz. "A nervous groom, did you see that, Moore?"

This is terrible, thought Moore, I can't watch anything like that. These people are crazy, getting us over here to watch a thing like that, for he realized now the old man had meant this. Schultz and his barbecue! A hot, prickly feeling swept over Moore's body as he looked at the bull and then away.

The bull swung his head nervously from side to side, annoyed by the people crowding around him, and his feet shuffled rapidly and dangerously in the dirt. Suddenly he reared again and crashed onto the cow, hopping grotesquely to reach her. The Italians shouted.

"aaaaAAH!" they said as the bull went up, then, "AAaaah," diminishing, as he came back to earth, unfulfilled.

Moore sat down in his chair.

"I'd like to have the whole Fifth Army see this," Schultz said, walking over and sitting in the other chair. "Including Mock Clock, sitting right here in the grandstand. All except the English, of course. They wouldn't know what the hell was going on."

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The bull, thought Moore. The bull was a failure, a flop, he was ridiculous, worse than useless, because it takes something to feed him. These people! Whatever they do, whichever way they turn, it's wrong, it doesn't come out right. A bull, like that...

"I've never liked bulls," he said, and he leaned his head back against the chair, breathing heavily with his mouth open.

"Really?" Schultz looked at Moore's closed eyes, smiling. "They're usually more effective than this, I think, at that. What the hell, they're designed for the job, they don't have anything to worry about. These people, though, they're really something, aren't they? We're the guests of honor at a breeding party, you know, unless you count the bull and the cow, and if it turns out to be a breeding party as scheduled. They've all had a lot of faith in that bull, probably for years by the looks of him, really counted on him. And why not? What the hell can you count on, if not a bull? Not a damn thing, especially in this bare-assed country they've got here. Now they find out even the bull is no damn good. It's enough to make you think, isn't it?"

A fly buzzed about Moore's face, attracted by his open mouth but frightened by his breathing.

Schultz took a deep, gulping drink from his bottle and looked at Moore.

"Maybe it all means something," he said, waving a hand listlessly, vaguely. "Don't you like to think it does? Don't you like to think it all has some kind of order, some reason behind it, like it was all laid out in a book of rules somewhere? But hell," he shouted angrily, "they use a worm for a bookmark!"

Moore laughed and fell back into his chair.

"I know how you feel," Schultz said soothingly. "Don't you think I feel the same way, really? What I was saying a minute ago, about dying, it sounded silly, didn't it? Can you imagine being killed now? I can't think of anything more unlikely, even for you and Miller," he said, and he sounded content. "It's fantastic, you know it? Here we are, thousands of us over here and thousands of them over there, and people dying every day, killing each other! Ha! I don't believe it! I can see the bull, the poor old broken-down bull, but I can't

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see the rest. Really, it's too screwy. The only thing that bothers me," he said confidentially to Moore, who sat with his head in his hands, "is the shelling. I've been meaning to ask you if we can't pick a strip in a better place this time."

Moore did not answer, and after waiting a moment Schultz leaned back in his chair and smiled at the crowd around the bull. He watched Miller dancing around the group, urging the Italians to do something.

"After all, we're not in the infantry, you know," Schultz said, watching Miller. "There's no point in making it tougher than it is."

"We!" Moore raised his head and stared at the mechanic.

"I know," said Schultz. "I'm a son of a bitch."

"Listen!" said Moore. "Why don't you get up there with nothing but a stove lid under your seat? You've never looked over your shoulder at a red-nosed Messerschmidt, or flown through a burst! Just tell me, have you ever known that everybody in the world was trying to get you, *you*, damn you!"

"I know," said Schultz.

"No, you don't know!" Moore said viciously. "You're filthy, Schultz! You don't know anything and you don't believe anything and you make fun of everybody who does, and I'm sick of it! Why can't you let me alone, I'm not like you. You act like it was all a big joke, being here and being in the army, as though somebody was playing a trick on us, as though there weren't any war or anything bad about it. Why is it, Schultz?" he said, and he was crying now, loudly, as he had not cried since he was a child, "is it because you're thirty-eight years old?"

"Ah, listen," said Schultz.

"Well, I'm twenty-one years old!" said Moore. "And I know why I'm here, I know nobody's playing a trick on me!" and the tears ran down his face, leaving streaks in the dirt. "I know what you think," he said, "you think I'll never go home again, don't you, you don't believe in anything, anything. Well, I do! Anyway," he said after a pause, "the war won't last forever, you know."

"Of course it won't," said Schultz.

"You're a liar," Moore said, and pressed his hands to his eyes. "Leave me alone."

"Now listen," Schultz began, but Moore stopped him.

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"Go on, greaseball," he said with his hands over his eyes. "Leave me alone, loudmouth."

"I'm sorry," Schultz said, and he got up and walked over to the Italians, the animals, and Miller.

"He can't get his pecker up," Miller said as Schultz came over to him. "They tried everything, they even tickled him with a stick, but it didn't do any good. Isn't that a hell of a fix to be in?"

"Terrible," said Schultz.

"What's the matter now?" asked Miller, looking from Schultz to Moore, hunched in his chair.

"I think he's blowing his top," Schultz said. "He's not taking the proper view of all this."

"What do you mean? This steer here, and the cow?" Miller lowered his wine-bottle in surprise. "What view is that?"

"Oh, I don't know," the mechanic said, irritated. "I just said it. And it's not a steer, it's a bull."

"I suppose he's pissed off again," Miller said happily. "I suppose cows and steers don't act like this in Texas, is that it now?"

"Miller," said Schultz. "Tell me something."

"Well?" Miller stared at the mechanic, waiting for him to continue.

"Never mind," said Schultz.

Are you afraid, I wanted to ask him, are you afraid up there, thought Schultz, but you can't do that, I suppose. It wouldn't accomplish anything, in fact it's unheard of, everything would go all to hell if you started that kind of thing. I'm afraid of it, terribly afraid of it, me, on the ground, almost out of range, and Moore knows it's there, but Miller doesn't even understand it. He understands a bum rap and a dirty deal, but he doesn't understand that. Do you suppose he thinks he could gold brick his way out of that, too? No, he doesn't think about it at all... he's still on maneuvers someplace, thinking that any day now they'll quit this silliness and go back into barracks. Hell, you can get *hurt* out here! that's what he thinks...

"How about some poetry, Miller," he said, smiling.

"In Exandoo did Kooblah Can a stately pleasuredom degree," recited Miller, striking a dramatic pose, one hand on

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his breast and the other dangling from his outflung arm. "Where Alf the sacred river ran through taverns measureless to man down to a sunless sea..."

"That's the stuff," Schultz said, taking a wine bottle from a smiling Italian. "That's the stuff, *paesan*."

XII

How sad, thought Schultz, everybody will be dead but me. He smiled at the people standing around him and at the bull moving nervously at the end of the rope. Dimly he heard Miller's voice reciting, but he paid no attention, slowly lowering himself to the ground, allowing his legs to fold, holding the wine bottle delicately by the neck.

I should have told Moore, he thought. Moore, I should have said, maybe a thousand years from now some GI will dig a shit trench in your grave and never know the difference. You've probably dug up a Roman or Etruscan yourself and hidden your droppings in his hole. That's life, Moore! that's what I should have said. It's sad, everything's sad, but that's the way it is. You can think of anything, anything at all, and if you think about it long enough it's sad as hell. *Triste*. No bloody good. Even the weather. A nice bright day in the fall, a cool feeling on the shadow side of everything but warm out in the sun. That's enough to twist your guts out, Moore! All the beautiful, fresh young women you saw go by on days like that, and you never spoke to them, never saw them again. Or the ones you did speak to, that you spent days like that with, that you made love to before you were thirty-eight years old. Where are they now? Where are the feeky-feeks of yesteryear, he said to himself, trying to be brutal, trying to fight the knowledge that he was drunk and dirty, sprawled in the filth of a nameless farmyard with grease under his fingernails, wearing last week's socks and underwear. We used to meet by the railroad bridge, not the one in town but out on the west, out where the trees grew so neatly along the river, with such order, and we'd walk along the Neckar on the towpath, watching the barges until we got to the restaurant, remember? And we always had the same table on the bricks, under the biggest tree, because you could look down the river from that table and everything tasted better

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there. Those winey afternoons, they don't have wine like that anymore, I'll bet, and I don't even remember the name of it. Maybe I couldn't even find the restaurant, but yes, I know I could do that, certainly. But it's probably moved, it sat there a hundred years and now if I want to find it again the bastards will have moved it, for no reason whatever. Well, the hell with them, there are other places to eat, you know, the country's full of places right along there, wonderful places...

And now she's probably standing in line at a water point somewhere, the skin on her bare legs cracked and purple, split, with sores on her ankles and a bucket on her arm, or maybe she's a whore in Mannheim, or Stuttgart, or Muenchen. Either that or the sweetie of some sergeant, maybe even an officer, walking with him somewhere or waiting for him to come back from Russia, from *der drang nach osten*, you betcha, the son of a bitch. Or maybe he's up there in the mountains, thinking about me. Maybe she told him about me and the poor bastard is squatting in a rockpile up there somewhere with his nose full of dust, thinking about me and about her, about how clean her hair smelled, only it probably doesn't smell that way now, after two or three years of sleeping in the *luftschutzkeller*. Besides, he thought with a little stab of shock, she must be thirty-five by now and nobody smells like that when they're thirty-five, and he inhaled deeply of his own odor there in the farmyard, the sweat and smell of his hot, greasy clothing and the animal fat smell from his clumsy boots. Nothing's worth a damn, he thought, with such sadness that it was almost a cool, safe and relaxed feeling. It's all politics, anyhow.

Like at Lucien's bar in Grenoble, he went on drunkenly, ignoring the buzz of the farmyard and Miller's sing-song voice, reciting. Those characters with the little red stars under their lapels, like you get on chewing tobacco, buying us drinks because we said we had been in Spain, for Christ's sake, and we'd never been near the damn country at all. And the ski politics, the one bunch parading around the Place Grenette in their rich clothing and the others in that little bar out on the edge of town toward Voirons, where you went up the mountain. If you felt honest you went out to the bar on the edge of town, but if you were thirsty you went to the

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Place Grenette and found somebody to drink with in Felix's, or someplace else where it was expensive. And I usually did that, I was usually thirsty, he told himself angrily, I was the same way even then, long before then. The hell of it was I could drink better with the Grenette crowd and their beautiful, wellfashioned women. You didn't have to think about anything but the drinks and the nice smells, there were even potato chips on the tables. But at the edge of town it was ski, ski, ski, until everybody was in a fever from it, they all thought they were Greek heroes drinking hot white wine at a penny a shot, everything was *en haut*, *en haut*! until you were ready to climb the mountain right then and there, ready to claw your way up the bastard with nothing on but street shoes and a single breasted suit, like the nigger who did and died. The colored boy couldn't understand it, it drove him nuts, he had to get up there and find out what the hell it was all about so of course he froze to death when the liquor wore off. Whenever I started feeling like that I went back to the Place Grenette, I went back there and talked ski to those rich bastards until my tongue was swollen like a sausage, and then I forgot it, so let's forget it now. Anyway, they're all gone, I'll never see them again, not any of it again, it's all thrown away like everything else. The house in Heilbronn must be gone by now, it was a railroad town, you know, they wouldn't have overlooked that, and of course I suppose Berlin is finished completely. Everything's smashed, what the hell, I always knew it would be, everywhere I went. There's nothing in the other direction, either, it all stinks, it's rotten, worn out by the crazy way they do things, rubbed right down until it screeches like a slate, until all the stringy ugliness shows through. A million square miles of Pittsburgh! That's all, cheap towns, crooks, thugs, syphilitic sheep looking for a Judas goat every minute of their lives, north or south, east or west, just asking for it! And they get it, right where it does the most good, it's a broken bottle-end in their kissers and they don't even feel it, they're as bugged as a shack full of Mexicans, hopped up, floating, way up in the clouds, it's raining urine and they think it's imported perfume, duty free, the rivers are brimfull of stale piss. The secondhand paradise, overnight everything's a junkheap with a brandnew billboard on top, a tremendous advertisement for soap or

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oleomargarine. Junk, junk, always more, the place is smothered in it! And what the hell are we supposed to be up to? They'll have a new label for it tomorrow or the next day, we'll hear about it, we get the hometown papers, it'll all be explained. Don't you know what you stand for, you slob? Don't you get it? For the love of motherhood, by the bylaws of the American Legion, by the sweet feet of Christ's sick self, don't you understand it? It's simple enough, we're doing our best to put up with you, you know, but don't try us too much or we're liable to drop you into the hot seat. Look, we have a flag, it's red, white and blue. We're religious, we practically have the racket sewed up, in fact, the next pope will probably be a New Yorker. We have a two-ocean navy and the Panama canal, without one you wouldn't have the other and that's simple enough, isn't it? We have the statue of liberty, New York harbor, WE SPEAK ENGLISH, FOR CHRIST'S SAKE! Are you nuts,or what? This is all yours, son, don't you get it? Some day it'll belong to you, you've got to understand that, you've got to live up to it, this didn't come about overnight, you know. It took a long time, a lot of sweat to get us where we are today, but if you keep acting the way you do you're liable to knock the whole works over, we might wind up with something else instead. And it wouldn't be any damned good, either, you can believe that, nothing else ever is. It starts out fine, we know that, but it all goes to hell in a hurry. You know that, admit it, come on now, it's silly to question the status quo, even to wonder about it, isn't it?... yes, yes, leave me alone, leave yourself alone, thought Schultz. I should explain all this to Moore but I don't give a good God damn, I know that nothing, not one single thing is worth anything at all except myself, because I'm alive, there isn't anything whatever beyond that, it's hooey, crap, the old con. It's thinking about Moore that does it, what started me off on it, anyway, I forgot all that stuff a long time ago. It was Moore and the bull. The bull failed, he's harmless to everybody now, you just have to sweat it out, that's all, and when it finally comes it's nothing at all, you're not afraid of it anymore. Money, the boss, a woman, none of it's as bad as you think it will be, not when it's finally on you, at your throat. Not if you know it isn't worth anything, that it's all so much crap, unimportant trash,

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the main thing is just yourself. Just thinking about myself in Heilbronn or Grenoble or Berlin is enough for me, I know you can't have anything more than that. I can think about the women, about the way they smelled and smiled and talked, the way they looked at me, their soft, warm thighs, beautiful kneecaps as delicate as watches, dimples in their hips, blonde fuzz in the hollows of shoulder blades, breasts burning and the feel of them through silk or cotton, that's enough. Or meals, drinks I had in a thousand places, sauerbraten, barbecued ribs, beer, chartreuse cardinals in Lucien's, alexanders in the morning at the Hotel Europe, fifteen-year-old scotch in the Coal Hole, hot frankfurters in Harry's bar, or the barrels of beer at The Peanut, chilled, freezing, on those steamy afternoons, soaked with sweat and my fingers smelling of money, somebody else's money. The same old crowd every afternoon, just like me, disgusted, sick of it, hating to go home, refusing to think of it all beginning again in the morning. The Bosses scattered all over town that we cursed and spat on, examining every detail of their perfidiousness, their niggardliness, their absolutely incredible stupidity, dragging out details about them that really floored you, we were horrified at each other's terrible luck! There wasn't one in the bunch that you'd save from the worst possible death by lifting so much as a finger, we were astounded at such a collection of idiots. Where did they come from, we wondered, how had they managed to become so completely, hopelessly inhuman? They thought more of their collie dogs than they did of us, it was obvious, no question about it at all. A fine thing, the bastards! Those silly dogs, it seemed they all had one, inbred, filthy, crapping anywhere, lying in it, it was all over their rear ends all the time, we'd see them, noses like needles, they hated your guts, they didn't care if you lived or died, just like their owners. Really, it's a wonder we weren't all commies, only it wasn't that sort of place, The Peanut. In fact, it wasn't even that sort of town, we stayed pure. The only one who came close to it was the reporter when he joined the guild, undercover. That upset us! We weren't sure he could be trusted after that! Fortunately, he didn't give a shit whether we thought so or not, all he wanted was to get out of his own private hellhole and into the Nut, where he could rave and rant all he wanted. A good thing, too, we

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heard things about the scum we worked for that might have escaped us, otherwise. There's nothing like having a friend who works for that paper, any paper, especially if he's a boozer. And of course we all were in our little way, we were awash in beer, all afternoon and far into the night, swearing vengeance, threatening anything, anything at all against our employers, the people who kindly made it possible for us to drink beer. What a mess! Speeches, shouts, obscenities, women waiting in vain for us all over town, suppers ruined, we didn't care! We were at grips with the devil himself, we had our hands around his throat, he was drowning in beer, we were about to win out! Jesus, you can't just go home when things have reached that pitch. Its gets so you never want to go home at all, you never want to get out of bed again. What's the use? There's nothing ahead but the same old grind, months, years of it, you could write the script for the rest of eternity, there aren't any surprises in it, no trick endings, unless you go in for crime or jump the rails some other way, and then you really are finished, that's the excuse they're looking for. You won't be missed, we're overpopulated as it is, even the war won't change that, although it has brightened everybody up considerably, given us a change. What the hell! They know what they're doing, they let us go right up to the explosion point and then pull a diversion, jab a safety valve into us and let out just enough hot air. When we're thoroughly tired of this and they know it we'll all go back and start building up pressure again... God! Dear, sweet God! and Schultz began to cry, sitting on the ground with the wine bottle between his knees.

XIII

" 'But I was young and foolish, and now am full of tears,' " said Miller.

He stood in front of Schultz with a bottle in his left hand, his right arm extended in a languid, limp-wristed gesture. He smiled down at Schultz.

"Everybody on a crying jag," he said happily. "The gooks are gonna think we're all queers."

He sipped from his bottle and watched Schultz dab at his face with the scarf.

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"That's some bull," he said. "The barbecue was a better idea."

"Yes," said Schultz, looking up, his face clean where the tears and scarf had washed and wiped away the dirt. "I must be drunk as a hoot owl."

"Don't worry about a thing," said Miller. "Just keep moving, keep moving," and he jiggled around in a little circle before the mechanic, holding his wine bottle in front of his chest like a rifle at port arms.

"You're so right, so right!" Schultz cried, but weakly, and he stood up and looked around the farmyard. It was rapidly getting dark. "What did you say about the bull? What about the bull?"

"He's beat," said Miller. "I think he's shot his wad. They got him over by the stable or whatever it is, giving him a pep talk, but it won't do any good."

Schultz looked and saw that the Italians had led the bull some distance from the cow and were standing around him, shouting and waving their arms, as though exhorting a prize-fighter to come out of his corner just once more, to go out for just one more round.

"There's just so many shots in a clip," Miller said. "Or maybe this one never had any in him at all, they just thought he did."

"A reasonable assumption," Schultz said carefully. "As I seem to have said already, if you can't believe in a bull, what the hell can you believe in?"

Naturally, he thought, you can't believe in anything, I just went all through that, I thought, you can't hope for anything, and as long as you know that you're all right. It doesn't make any difference that there's no love, no faith, no truth, no tomorrow morning when everything's-going-to-be-all-right, and if you know that nothing can bother you. That's what I've been wanting to say to Moore, I've just been warming up to it, that's all, but wait a minute. Haven't I already told him? Looking at the crowd around the bull he tried to remember but couldn't, and then the crowd moved and he saw the bull clearly, his great, thick neck stretched out low, his blocky, solid head turned, the horns showing clearly against the wall behind him even in the dying light. Schultz realized suddenly that it was nearly dark, that they had spent

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the afternoon drinking and waiting for something, he couldn't remember what, was it food? but anyway waiting a long time in the sun. And he also thought, without knowing why, something always happens when you least expect it, and he started for the bull.

He could hear Miller calling after him but he kept going, not looking back. I'm going to prove something, he said to himself, saying it angrily, exasperated, as though he had been arguing for hours with someone and had turned away at last to seize and present the absolute proof of his remarks. He came up to the Italians and the bull, which looked at him, and stood by the bull's head, not knowing why he had come there. The Italians seemed to welcome him, but with reserve, moving aside for him more out of politeness than eagerness to have him there. He realized, not caring, that they were disturbed by the bull's failure, that for them it was not something to joke about, perhaps especially not in front of the Americans, but he was bored and annoyed with these people.

"Give me that," he said to the man holding the rope, and took the cheap, worn line from the man's grudging hand and turned away, pulling on the rope, not looking to see whether the bull would follow or not. But he felt the slackness in the line and knew the bull was coming behind him as he walked back across the farmyard in the shadows toward the chair where Moore sat, where he had been sitting for hours, probably.

"Listen," Schultz called to Moore, while still thirty feet from him. "Listen, I want to tell you something, I just thought of it, the important thing is to survive, no matter what the bastards do to you. Like the bull! He's still alive, isn't he?"

"What are you doing?" Moore said, leaning forward and peering through the gloom. He sounded startled, like a man awakened in the night by a strange noise. "What's going on?"

"Never mind that," Schultz said impatiently, annoyed by the interruption. "This is important. You can't give in to the bloody system no matter what."

"You're drunker than you were before," Moore said. "Aren't we ever going back to the field? Let's get out of here, it's too dark to see now."

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He stood up, ready to leave.

"All right, all right!" shouted Schultz, really angry now at these sticks Moore was shoving between his legs. "In a minute. But first, and this is important, I keep telling you, I've got something to say..."

"Is that the bull? Are you pulling that bull behind you?" Moore took a nervous step forward, then stopped. "You don't know what you're doing! Get him out of here!" and he retreated behind the ornate chair. "Are you crazy? Don't bring him over here!"

"Shut up!" Schultz shouted furiously. He raised his right arm and made an angry, throwing motion at Moore, throwing as hard as he could, but the movement halted in mid-flight, his arm was arrested strangely above his head as the rope he held in his right hand jerked up, taut, a hard line from his hand to the ring in the nose of the bull.

Of course, thought Schultz as he felt Miller's hands hard on his arm, pulling him, clawing at him, dragging him roughly until he fell awkwardly and heavily to the ground, he's had to put up with a lot today but I didn't hurt him that much, did I, and he felt the quick, searing pain as the rope ran out of his hand and the bull crashed past him like a carload of coal going down a steel chute. Lying on his back in the dirt he heard the bull's snort, the yelling, the screaming, and then, peculiarly, a crunching sound, like wooden planks splintering under pressure applied to the ends. It was a quick, very brief sound, almost lost in the other sounds, but Schultz thought he heard it very distinctly and as he lay there gasping for breath he realized what it was. The chair, he thought, the big bastard ran over the horsehair chair.

There was a sucking rush toward the open end of the farmyard, thudding and running and shouting, and then it was quiet. Schultz struggled to sit up, his lungs burning and pumping, then managed to stand, and over his breathing he heard a sound like someone sawing wood, far away, the sound of a cross cut saw rasping in deliberate rhythm through a plank, and then, in the farmyard, near him in the darkness, a wet, thick gargle. He looked and saw Miller on his knees, a faint smudge kneeling over Moore and the broken pieces of the horsehair chair.

That's impossible, he thought, a dull, numb feeling, and

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he walked, almost falling, stumbling on a bottle, until he fell to his knees beside Miller with the sawing and gargling louder and louder until it beat against his skull, surrounding him.

"No," he said, "no, is he hurt?" and he put his hand out, into a warm, quivering slime which he had not seen but which now gleamed faintly in the dark like wet pavement, Sergeant Moore's stomach and intestines.

"Ah," said Schultz, "Aah," and he tore with both hands at his scarf, jerking it from his neck and folding it into a thick, billowy square which he dropped into the slime. At once the white square began to disappear in the dark, it seemed to dissolve in patches as the liquid drowned it, until it was no longer visible, and Schultz was then aware that the sawing and gargling had stopped, that he and Miller were alone in the farmyard. They ran away, he thought, scared, or to catch the bull, and he got up and began walking toward the open end of the farmyard, where he remembered the gate was, not stopping as Miller called to him.

It's happened so often, he thought, so many thousands of times, it's everywhere, it's in the valley, it's up in the haze in the mountains, you find it wherever you go. There was

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one on the road to Mignano with the seat of his pants torn off, lying in the ditch where the dirt and trash collected around him for weeks, washing up against him like driftwood against a log, against a snag, collecting around his bare butt, and another one in the creek at Vairano, we finally pulled him out with a rope, and there was one in the field at Rocca, his face had been eaten away by the dogs and when we pulled off his tags the gas came out of him in a rush and a rumble, we threw up, there are thousands, they're everywhere, lying out there in the dark, but this is the first time I ever saw it happen, this is the first time it ever happened to me... Oh, God, hang on...

"We'll have to get the half-track," he said without stopping or turning around. "We can't carry him like that," and he passed through the gate and turned toward the river. No, he thought, we certainly can't carry him like that, and he walked on in the darkness, waiting for it to rush at him, and trying to remember where they had crossed the dry riverbed.

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NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

FICTION

Bowden Broadwater *(Ciao)* shares, with this story, the Gertrude Vanderbilt Prize for Humor. His co-winner is Hughes Rudd whose story will appear in a future issue. Mr. Broadwater lives in New York. This is his first published fiction.

Hughes Rudd *(The Lower Room)* has been published twice previously in THE PARIS REVIEW. A mid-westerner by birth, he now works for CBS in New York. Dutton will publish his first, as yet untitled, novel.

Jan Gerhard Toonder *(The Spider)* was first published in English in THE PARIS REVIEW No. 23. Our No. 24 contained his *The Time We Will*. He is a Dutchman, living in Amsterdam, who has published nine novels in his native language.

INTERVIEW

Frederick Seidel *(Interview with Robert Lowell)* is a graduate of Harvard where he was Literary Editor of *The Harvard Advocate*. His poetry has been published in *The Atlantic Monthly* and *The Noble Savage*.

POETRY

Donald Davie *(Letter to Curtis Bradford* and *Lasalle and the Discovery of the Great West)* has published three books of verse and three of criticism. He visited California for a year recently and was inspired to write a series of poems of which these are two. He teaches at Cambridge University.

Thom Gunn *(A School of Resistance* and *Bonheur)* spent the fall of 1960 in Europe under the terms of a Somerset Maugham Award. An Englishman, he now lives in the United States. His poetry has been widely published.

X. J. Kennedy *(At the Ghostwriter's Deathbed* and *In a Prominent Bar in Secaucus One Day)* will have his first book of poetry, *Nude Descending a Staircase*, published this August by Doubleday. He won a Hopwood award at the University of Michigan in 1959.

Daniel J. Langton *(The Marriage of Anne)* was born in New Jersey and now lives in California. His poems have been published in *The New Orleans Poetry Journal*, *The Nation*, and other magazines.

Lewis Turco *(Dream of a House)* will have new poems appearing in *Poetry*, *Sewanee*, and *Carleton Miscellany*.

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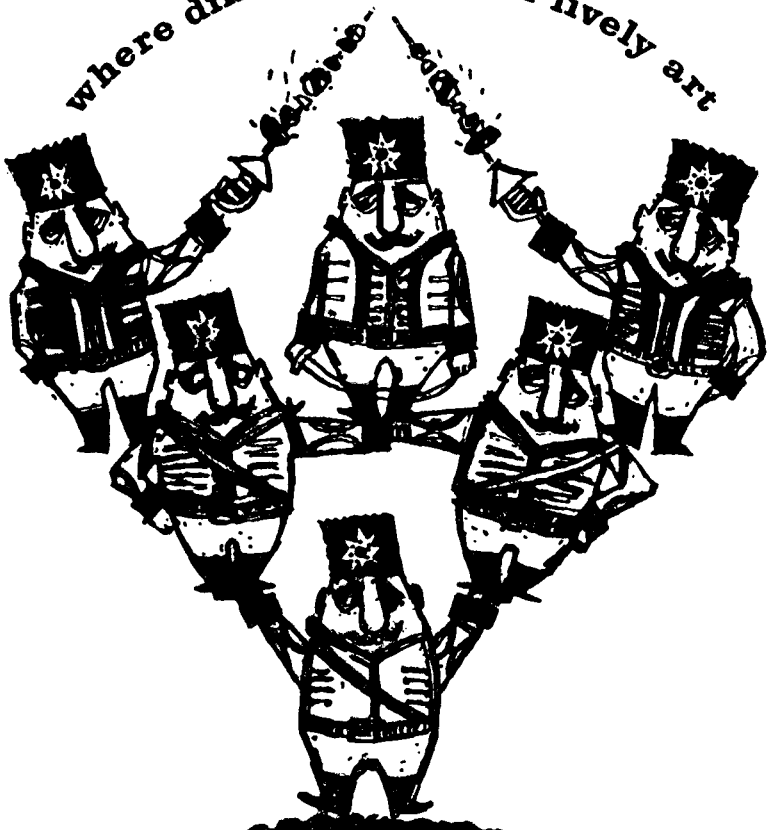

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ANDRE DEUTSCH

IT'S THE THOUGHT...

THERE was once a man trying to make a pretty girl with brains. He stepped up his campaign from violets to roses and from lager to champagne, but she was so pretty that she was inured to such tributes, and so bright that she could perceive the motive behind them. 'This is a waste of money,' thought the man, the mean thing, but he did not want to give up. So he fell back on lending her advance copies of our books which he borrowed from our advertising manager, an acquaintance of his. He began with David Caute's *Comrade Jacob* (May 12, 16/–), thinking that the title of Caute's first novel, *At Fever Pitch*, was a good omen, but this one is a serious historical and political novel, so all the girl did as a result was criticize Marxism. Then he tried Herbert Gold's stories, *Love and Like* (16/–), but all she did after that was love and like Herbert Gold. Then he tried Roy Fuller's *The Father's Comedy* (May 29, 15/–), but all she did after that was talk wisely and compassionately about family relationships. So he thought crossly, 'to Hell with her, if she's such a bookworm let her read *this*,' and he thrust on her *Human Behaviour: a New Approach*, by Claire and W. M. S. Russell (May 29, 42/–). It is a profound and detailed work, and he was the kind of man who says to girls 'What put that into your little head?' Well she read it (why not? It's intended for the general reader), and after that she gave him a dirty look and a shrewd analysis of his own current behaviour which entirely reoriented his motives. So much so that from that moment he never saw her again. (The moral of this, you see, is not How to Get Your Girl, but How Good These Books Are.)

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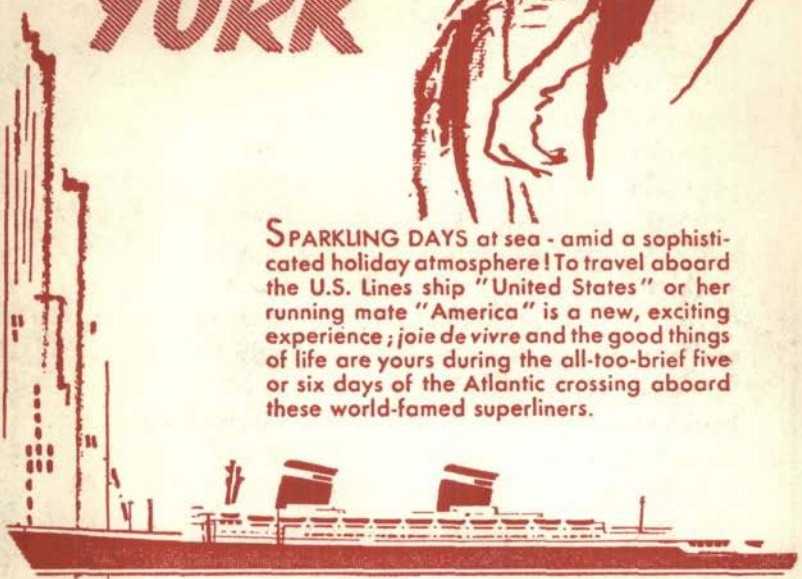

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